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GILDED MEMORIES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE FRONTIER IN RURAL ALBERTA AS REFLECTED IN POPULAR HISTORY

by

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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GILDED MEMORIES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE FRONTIER IN RURAL ALBERTA AS REFLECTED IN POPULAR HISTORY

MASTER OF ARTS

SPRING 1985

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled GILDED MEMORIES: PERCEPTIONS OF THE FRONTIER IN RURAL ALBERTA AS REFLECTED IN POPULAR HISTORY,

submitted by JOANNE STILES

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Supervisor

Macleod

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Date March 11. 1985 ....

DEDICATION

To the memory of my father, Leonard Edgar Stiles, whose interest in History and encouragement helped me greatly.

ABSTRACT

In the last four decades Alberta has experienced an explosion in the writing of popular, and particularly local, histories. Within these volumes one can gain access to the historical perceptions of literally thousands of different individuals. What emerges from them, however, is a curiously uniform view of the settlement period (1880-1929) on the Alberta frontier. This thesis will explore the nature of this view and attempt to explain the reasons for its uniformity.

The material is presented in the popular and amateur histories in a rather definite hierarchy - the individual, the family, and the community - which has been adopted as the organizing structure of this thesis. Pioneer family men are depicted as having been capable, adaptable, morally strong, and adventurous individuals. This image is juxtaposed in many narratives with that of bachelor settlers who are held to have been irresponsible, comic, and at least mildly immoral. Adult women appear in the histories as wives and mothers who occupied a supporting position in the frontier enterprise. They are portrayed as self-sacrificing almost to the point of martyrdom but also as unfailingly competent. The frontier family life depicted in the histories is one with relatively rigid roles: fathers in the fields, mothers in the home, and children as minor assistants. The frontier community is presented as having

been a solid, self-sufficient, cooperative unit. It worked together, played together, and grew together all in near complete harmony.

It is the primary contention of this thesis that the picture of frontier life in Alberta outlined above constitutes a contemporary myth. This is not to suggest that popular and amateur historians are necessarily presenting a false view of the past; rather, they are employing a sort of collective, selective memory with the result that some events are emphasized while others are ignored. Myth-making is a process with a definite, though not always conscious, purpose. It serves to affirm and transmit a society's values and concerns. Rural Albertans today are caught in a variety of rapid social and economic changes and popular history is, at least in part, an expression of their consequent anxieties.

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POPULAR HISTORY AND THE FRONTIER MYTH

Rural Albertans, over the last four decades, have become myth-makers. In the process of writing their own local histories, they have created for themselves a version of the founding of the province which is both acceptable to them as a group and useful in establishing their position *vis a vis* the rest of society. This interest in the past does not, of course, make these Albertans unique: as various people have argued, a highly developed historical consciousness is a feature of modern western civilization. The study of history in a manner believed to be factual and the recording of that material in a purportedly objective fashion are important characteristics of our intellectual life.[1] In reality, this desired objectivity is never achieved: "our apprehension of history will always be entangled with the emotions, slants, and confusions of particular persons in particular societies and particular times."[2] It has become something of a truism that the work of even the most professional of historians is influenced by his cultural and political environment, even if only in the selection of his subject matter. When, as is the case with recent publications in Alberta, the historian is untrained and is writing on intensely personal matters, objectivity is harder to achieve and may, in fact, not even really be attempted. The mythification of history is, therefore, inevitable.

The word "myth" evokes images of the primitive, the ritualistic, of classical Greece and Rome, and the religions of the East. It embodies a concept of the fantastic from which we seek to disassociate our perceptions of our own past, the origins of the society in which we live. Although this impression is produced, in part, by the classical and primitive interests of mythographers and mythologists, their current writings suggest that this connection is more incidental than inherent.[3] Myth-making is a continuing process, crucial to the existence of any society. Joseph Campbell contrasts the altered appearances and sources of myth with their unchanging function:

> The intent of the old mythologies to integrate the individual in his group, to imprint on his mind the ideals of that group, to fashion him according to one or another of its orthodox stereotypes, and to convert him thus into an absolutely dependable cliche, has become assumed in the modern world by an increasingly officious array of ostensibly permissive, but actually coercive, demythologized secular institutions. A new anxiety in relation to this development is now becoming evident, however; for with the increase, on one hand, of our efficiencies in mass indoctrination and, on the other, of our uniquely modern Occidental interest in the fosterage of authentic individuals, there is dawning upon many a new and painful realization of the depth to which the imprints, stereotypes, and archetypes of the social sphere determine our personal sentiments, deeds, thoughts, and even capabilities for experience.[4]

The emphasis placed by Campbell on myth as a teacher of social mores and common attitudes is reflected in the writings of many who study the field. Political scientists Dan Nimmo and James Combs,[5] biblical scholar Raphael Patai,[6] and mythologist Mircea Elaide[7] all echo this perception. These same scholars identify a concern with origins as one of the characteristics of myth. This may involve origins in the absolute sense of the creation of the world or it may be as trivial as the genesis of a new practice.

The role of myth in the historical consciousness of Canadians has received some attention recently.[8] Those historians pursuing such studies indicate a general agreement with the concept of myth as a mechanism of social organization. In the introduction to his thesis on the loyalist tradition in New Brunswick, Murray Barkley suggests that, "myth is a belief given uncritical acceptance by the members of a group, especially in support of existing or traditional practices or institutions which it serves to explain."[9] Canadian historians tend to emphasize the irrelevance of factual accuracy or inaccuracy in determining the existence of a myth.[10] This is, perhaps, because they deal not with a hazy and distant past but with society's interpretations of events which took place often within the lifetime of those creating the myths. The stories which emerge do not contain creatures from the supernatural or discuss the performance of magic acts. Much of the process of myth creation is, in fact, little more than selective memory. The choice of what to include, what to emphasize, and what to ignore completely is an essential part of collective historical interpretation. Myth-makers present their material as though it was historically accurate;

something which they often believe it to be and which it often is. This situation obscures the central issue in studying myths which, as Ralph Heinzman notes, perform the same function, "[w]hether they are reflections or negations of reality."[11] Any scholar who becomes absorbed in evaluating the veracity of a myth misses the point of studying it - the insights it can offer into the concerns and aspirations of the society which created it.

Myth can most usefully be defined by what it does rather than by what it is. The elements which comprise myths vary tremendously; the functions remain constant. A myth is a device by which a society explains it origins, its values, and its expectations to the individuals within it. Even more, myth is a tool used to structure the relationships within a society, to show each member his place in the social scheme. In times of crisis it can also be an escape, allowing the reader or listener to dwell on an age which he perceives to have contained that which he finds lacking in contemporary life or to have been free from that which he deplores in his own time. Graeme Patterson, another student of the loyalist myth in Canada, compares myth to metaphor:

> Expressive of a poet's experience, metaphor is evocative of the reader's; and so it is with myth. And both function as a sort of lens or screen, whereby certain features of a subject are ignored or suppressed, while others are emphasized or distinctively organized.[12]

The recent surge of publications in Alberta by amateur and popular historians creates an ideal opportunity to study the myth-making process. Since the Second World War small rural areas have published more than four hundred books,[13] in each of which community residents chronicle the arrival and progress in the district of their families. In addition, pioneer memoirs and biographies and more general works by popular historians have become a popular form of literature.[14] The largest body of material, the local histories, are all written in a similar format and are, therefore, easily comparable. The book-length biographies, memoirs, and general histories, although smaller in number and more diverse in type, allow the reader access to more complete impressions of the frontier and frontiersmen. The combination of these materials yields a sense of the historical myth of the Alberta frontier that is comprehensive in both scope and content.

The material which has come out of rural Alberta presents an intriguing problem; it has been written by thousands of different individuals but the picture of the frontier and of pioneer society which emerges from it is remarkably uniform. This holds true in spite of considerable variations in the timing of settlement, the ethnic origins and financial well-being of the settlers and in the physical environment of the areas in which they settled. The rapid growth in historical interest raises also the question of causes. Why have Albertans suddenly begun to devote substantial funds and energy to writing about their pasts? In part, the answers are provided by the authors themselves: in their prefaces and introductions they often outline the factors which motivated them to write history. One reason commonly given is the conviction that the individual or group being memorialized is particularly deserving and in danger of being overlooked.[15] In the local histories, commemoration of the pioneers' efforts is often the stated purpose:

> This book is written in an effort to record the History of the Pioneers of EDGERTON and DISTRICTS.
>
> To pay tribute to the early homesteaders, who left good homes in the older countries to settle this empty land. Coming West to this part of Alberta that for many years had been traversed only by Indians and buffalo. With no railway or roads, they came by horses, ox team, and on foot, fording the rivers and treking across miles of untouched prairie, building houses of logs or sod, to make a home for their families.
>
> The hardships and difficulties experienced by these people are unbelievable. In this book we are trying to express a special thank you to all the pioneers for putting their hand to the plow and not looking back.[16]

Further to this desire to acknowledge the contributions of the pioneers, there is a notion that those raised in modern comfort need to experience, at least vicariously, the hardships of their ancestors. The privations and ceaseless exertions on the frontier are seen as having been tremendous builders of character lacking in today's world.[17] In addition, some authors and editorial committees write for the sake of simple nostalgia rather than for any more definite purpose. They find in the frontier period pleasant memories and entertaining anecdotes which they wish to share with their readers.[18]

The most compelling motivation expressed for publishing frontier history based on personal experience is the perception that such knowledge is a rapidly disappearing resource:

> Memory is a tenous thing. Sometimes it is so fragile that the memory itself is lost; sometimes it is so strong that in its grip you experience the original emotions all over again. In order to reinforce memory where it is weak, and to give it a more solid basis in facts where it is strong, this book has been prepared and published.[19]

This perception is, of course, solidly based in fact. The generation who settled in Alberta between 1880 and 1929 is already much depleted and those who survive are, at very least, in their eighth decade. Even the group who experienced the frontier as children are now elderly. Any historian who wishes to compile recollections and reconstruct the past from the point of view of the average citizen and the ordinary events of his life must, therefore, act quickly. Clearly, this is the goal of local history clubs and committees and of others who write for the popular market. The stated motives of the authors, with few exceptions, are similar to those just discussed. The concerns of some writers and the tone of many of the works, however, suggest that there may be other factors, less well recognized, that stimulate historical publication. Identification and explication of these is another avenue for inquiry offered by the material.

As indicated earlier, the sources for this study of popular history in Alberta can be divided into three categories: general works by popular historians, book-length memoirs and biographies of specific individuals or single family units, and community histories comprising several short family history narratives and accounts of the growth of public and business institutions. The defining characteristic of volumes identified as "general" is that they give an overview of Alberta history or some aspect of it. Thus, J. G. MacGregor's *A History of Alberta* is an obvious example of this type of material. However, more specialized publications, *A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women* and *Boomtime: Peopling the Canadian Prairies*, to name two, also belong to this group. Although their subject matter is more restricted, it is not confined to a small district; it offers comment on a province-wide experience. Similarly, Grant MacEwan's *Fifty Mighty Men* and other works that deal with several prominent individuals contribute to a general understanding of Alberta history. In selecting his subjects and choosing the facts to be presented about them, the author is making an interpretive statement about provincial development as well as detailing the lives of the individuals. A final group of books which fit into this category are the social studies textbooks prepared for elementary school students under the Alberta Heritage Learning Resources Project. These publications combine discussions of community development and ethnic relations with narratives about specific people to provide school children with a basic understanding of Alberta history. The general works used for this study were selected so as to include examples of each of the types outlined above.

Memoirs and biographies are a much simpler block of material as only two divisions are apparent within the larger category. Most of the books are biographies written by members of the subjects' families or personal memoirs. Such works provide detailed narratives of the events in the lives of the individuals or the families but deal very little with phenomena outside the immediate households. The rest of the works in this category are biographies written by unrelated authors, for example, Eugenie Louise Myles' account of Sheridan Lawrence, The Emperor of Peace River. These latter books tend to be about men who were in some way outstanding and who had a significant impact on the development of the province or a region within it. The focus of the authors is, therefore, a dual one: the private and the public life of their subjects. Publication of biographies and memoirs has remained relatively constant over the last thirty years and those used in this study were chosen to reflect that.[20]

The third and largest block of potential source material is the category which may be described as community histories. The dramatic increase in historical publications has been most notable in this genre. Most agricultural communities in Alberta have either published a volume of their own or participated in joint publications with neighbouring towns. The integral coverage of the province obtained thereby renders these books an invaluable resource for this study. Moreover, these histories rely on the input of community residents: on average two-thirds of each book is taken up with family narratives.[21] Local residents and former residents of the area submit accounts which detail the arrival of their families in the district, the events of their first years of settlement, and the situations of surviving family members at the time of writing. With very little editing, in most cases, these narratives are inserted into the community book according to alphabetical order, date of original settlement, or district within the larger region. The result of this practice is that the existing bibliography gives the researcher access to the historical perceptions of several thousand Albertans.

The vast majority of community histories published since 1945 have been written after 1967. Although earlier examples of group-authored local histories certainly exist, the national centennial, the passage of the Alberta Historical Resources Act in 1973 with its funding provisions, and the provincial seventy-fifth anniversary have all been major impetuses to publish. The large numbers of local histories written over the last seventeen years made selection of material from within this category a more difficult task than was the case with biographies or with general works. In order to make the study feasible without creating a chronological or a regional bias, three books were chosen from those published each year since 1967 with a view to ensuring a balanced geographical distribution.[22] This represents approximately one-sixth of the total available. A much greater proportion of the pre-1967 volumes have been used because the total number of publications is much smaller. They were selected to reflect the southern Alberta predominance over the early publication of local history.[23]

Government, through the provincial Department of Culture and the federal Department of Health and Welfare, has actively fostered the writing of local histories. The New Horizons Program of Health and Welfare Canada is directed toward senior citizens' groups. The stated objective of the program is "to encourage and enable retired Canadians to become more actively involved in the life of their community,"[24] and thereby, "to reduce the sense of loneliness or inactivity experienced by some older people."[25] Grants of up to five thousand dollars are provided for a wide variety of recreational, cultural, and social service related activities, including the publication of local histories. New Horizons offers additional assistance by requiring that any group receiving grant money meet with a project consultant from the program. Fourteen of the community histories under study here acknowledge the contributions of New Horizons.

Alberta Culture's Historical Publications Assistance Program has a different focus; it is a provision of the

Historical Resources Act and funds groups on the basis of their contribution to the preservation of historically valuable information. The community history books are perceived by the Department of Culture as a useful collection of material which would otherwise be lost due to the demise of the pioneer generation.[26] Grants under the Historical Publications Assistance Program have been given out since 1974 and may be in amounts up to five thousand dollars. The program had a more modest forerunner which, from 1961 to 1973, gave out three to five hundred dollars for community history projects.[27] Advice on the process of writing histories is also provided by department field staff and at workshops which are set up for groups who request them. As well, the resources of the Provincial and Glenbow Archives are made available to history book clubs and committees. They are able to look at documentary materials pertaining to their regions and to examine the books produced by similar groups. Since 1973, Alberta Culture has also offered a Regional History Award of one thousand dollars annually for the best local history book judged according to literary merit, interest value, and success in relating subject matter.[28] Although individual authors are eligible to enter, nine of the ten prizes given from the inauguration of the award in 1973 to 1982 have been for books compiled by groups.[29]

It might be argued that dependence on government funding for approximately twenty-five percent of project cost,[30] use of a common pool of advisors, and entry into an adjudicated contest together account for the degree of similarity between local histories. Certainly, these factors are influential in promoting homogeneousness, particularly in the format used. Continuity at the superficial level of organization and appearance is furthered by advisors from printing firms. The great majority of the works are printed by one of a small number of companies who find it convenient and cost-efficient to encourage this similarity.[31] However, the importance of such influences should not be over-rated. The advice of Alberta Culture's staff and literature is used selectively by community groups. The prominence given to individual and family stories, for example, runs counter to the recommendations of both workshop leaders and Eric Holmgren's booklet, "Writing Local History", available to all who contact the Historical Resources Division.[32] Furthermore, the perceptions of the thousands of family biographers cannot be held to have been molded by the outside authorities who may have influenced the editorial committees or book club leaderships. It seems significant that the subject matter discussed by the writers of individual accounts and their interpretations of it are, to a large degree, echoed in the other two types of material employed here as sources and it is notable that there is no evidence to suggest that the authors or memoirs, biographies, and general histories have been involved with the program discussed above.

All of the sources for this study were written after the Second World War. Their subject matter, however, relates to the frontier period which, in Alberta, may be defined roughly as the years from 1880 to 1929. Prior to the former date there was very little settlement for agricultural purposes in the part of the North West Territories which became Alberta in 1905.[33] The latter date, 1929, is used to represent the end of the frontier era. It is impossible to select a date at which the agricultural frontier could be said to have closed; the process of opening new land continues today. However, the rate of immigration into Alberta did slow drastically after 1929, in part, as a result of the Depression.[34] Furthermore, the conditions experienced by mid-twentieth century pioneers were much different from those faced by their predecessors. Transportation and communication links, mechanization of farm tasks, increasing presence of government agencies, and diversification of economic activity and opportunity all contributed to a change in the character of pioneer life. As it is readily identified as a date of some significance, 1929 serves as a convenient terminus but it is actually indicative of a more prolonged transition.

Frontier conditions did not prevail within each area under consideration in this study for the whole of the period from 1880 to 1929. Some regions had developed beyond that point by the early years of this century,[35] while others were not settled until the late 1920s.[36] In addition, there was considerable variation between districts in the rates at which settlement occurred and living conditions improved. Some communities were settled rapidly by groups or colonies; others were occupied gradually by a heterogeneous population. The wealth of the settlers, the quality of the land they occupied, and the types of agriculture in which they engaged also differed and consequently so did their ability to provide amenities, individually and collectively. Therefore, it is not possible to specify a set number of years following initial settlement as the frontier period within all districts. This classification must be made based on the circumstances which pertained within each community. In general, this can be done based on the appearance of public institutions - schools, churches, and commercial outlets.

The community history books used here each contain an average of nearly four hundred family narratives.[37] In order to allow consideration of a greater number of regions, only every fourth account was read and only those that pertained to families that had arrived in the time identified as the community's frontier period were examined in depth. In spite of the brevity of most entries,[38] many of them contain detailed descriptions of certain incidents or features of the family's frontier experience. One is led to assume, therefore, that the factors mentioned are of particular significance to the writers. It is also probable that these detailed anecdotes are intended to give the reader a broader appreciation of the perceived realities of pioneer life than the incidents themselves would merit. On the basis of these assumptions, information was gathered from community history volumes by noting the aspects of frontier life on which individual authors seemed to focus and the context in which they appeared. In this way, features common to several narratives were easily identified. A similar method was employed in extracting material from memoirs, biographies, and general histories. However, as these book-length works lack the convenient highlighting of important perceptions offered by the brevity of accounts in community histories, the task required a more meticulous evaluation of the authors' priorities. By this method, albeit a rather elementary one, of content analysis, the elements of the common perceptions of Alberta's agricultural frontier period became apparent. Taken together, those elements constitute a popular myth.

The succeeding chapters will present the findings of this investigation into the work of amateur and popular historians on the agricultural frontier period in Alberta. When this study was started, it was assumed that the images of the pioneers and their communities would change significantly over the period from the late 1940s to the early 1980s. The degree of continuity, however, was more remarkable than was the change and so, the chronological outline which had been planned for this project had to be discarded. In its place, a topical approach has been adopted. The depiction of the individual frontiersman, the pioneer family, the nascent community, and their relations to the physical environment and outside society will be discussed. Where shifts in the prevailing perceptions have occurred over the period under study or from one region to another, they will be noted. However, the source material dictates that the focus of this study will be the description and explanation of an overwhelmingly uniform impression of the character of pioneer experiences in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Alberta.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1] John Lukacs, Historical Consciousness or the Remembered Past (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 19-23; Herbert Butterfield, The Origins of History (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 13; Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 113.

[2] Pardon E. Tillinghast, The Specious Past: Historians and Others (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1972), p. 4.

[3] Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1949), p. 382.

[4] Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God, 4 vols. (New York: The Viking Press, 1968) vol. 4: Creative Mythology, p. 86.

[5] Dan Nimmo and James Combs, Subliminal Politics: Myths and Mythmakers in America (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1980), p. 13.

[6] Raphael Patai, Myth and Modern Man (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 322.

[7] Eliade, p. 92.

[8] See for example: Journal of Canadian Studies 12 (Spring 1977) which entire issue was devoted to articles on Canadian mythologies, many of them historical; Douglas Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," Canadian Historical Review 63 (September 1982): 315-336; Murray Barkley, "The Loyalist Tradition in New Brunswick," (M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, Department of History, 1971).

[9] Barkley, p. 24.

[10] Ibid; Ralph Heinzman, "The Sympathy of the Whole," Journal of Canadian Studies 12 (Spring 1977): 1; Dennis Duffy, "Upper Canadian Loyalism: What the Textbooks Tell," Journal of Canadian Studies 12 (Spring 1977): 17.

[11] Heinzman, p. 1.

[12] Graeme Patterson, "An Enduring Canadian Myth: Responsible Government and the Family Compact," Journal of Canadian Studies 12 (Spring 1977): 14.

[13] Gloria Strathern, Alberta, 1954-1979: A Provincial Bibliography (Edmonton: University of Alberta, Printing Services Department, 1982), pp. 343-399; Interview with Judy Gshossmann, Historical Resources Division, Alberta Culture,

Edmonton, Alberta, 24 April 1984.

[14] Strathern, pp. 325-329, 333-343. It is difficult to determine precisely which works fall into these categories but it seems that more than sixty of them were published between 1954 and 1979.

[15] See for example: Grant MacEwan, *John Ware's Cow Country* (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1960), p. 3; E. C. Stacey, *W. D. Albright* (Beaverlodge, Alberta: Beaverlodge & District Historical Association, 1974), passim; Eliane Leslau Silverman, *The Last Best West* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984), p. iii.

[16] Edgerton and District Historical Society, *The Winds of Change* ([Edgerton, Alberta]: [Edgerton and District Historical Society], [1975]), p. 3; See also: Violet Florkewich, John Hrasko, and Allan Olson, eds., *Hills of Hope* (Spruce Grove, Alberta: Carvel Unifarm, 1976), p. 6.

[17] See for example: Fort Macleod History Book Committee, eds., *Fort Macleod - Our Colourful Past: A History of the Town of Fort Macleod, from 1874 to 1924* (Fort Macleod, Alberta: Fort Macleod History Book Committee, 1977), p. 5; Edgerton and District Historical Society, p. 6.

[18] See for example: North Lone Pine Women's Institute, eds., *Bucking Poles and Butter Churns: History of Lone Pine and District* (Didsbury, Alberta: North Lone Pine Women's Institute, 1972), p. 9; Peggy Holmes, *It Could Have Been Worse* (Toronto: Collins Publishing, 1980), pp. 7 & 13.

[19] Nanton and District Historical Society, eds., *Mosquito Creek Roundup* (Nanton, Alberta: Nanton and District Historical Society, 1975), p. 4; See also: Readymade Historical Society Book Committee, eds., *Readymade and District* ([Readymade, Alberta]: [Readymade Historical Society], 1977), p. 3; Maurice Destrube, *Pioneering in Alberta: Maurice Destrube's Story*, intro. Lewis G. Thomas, ed. James E. Hendrickson, Historical Society of Alberta, no. 4, gen. ed. R. C. Macleod (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1981), p. xxxiv.

[20] Twenty-six of the twenty-eight memoirs and biographies used in this study were written in the twenty-six years from 1956 to 1981. No publications were used from seven of those years and, in seven years, there were duplicates.

[21] The average length of the community histories used here is 491 pages. Approximately 355 of these, on average, are devoted to family stories.

[22] See Appendix A.

[23] See Appendix A.

[24] Health and Welfare Canada, "New Horizons" (Pamphlet Cat. N. H77-3/1978), (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1978), p. [2].

[25] Ibid, p. [3].

[26] Interview with Judy Gschossmann.

27 Ibid.

[28] Film and Literary Arts, Alberta Culture, "Alberta Regional History Award" (Pamphlet - No catalogue number available), (Edmonton: [n.p.], [n.d.]), p. [2].

[29] Ibid, p. [4].

[30] Interview with Judy Gschossmann.

[31] Ibid. The majority of the volumes are printed by Friesen Printers and a significant number of the rest are done by Co-op Press, ltd.

[32] Eric Holmgren, "Writing Local History" (Edmonton: Historical Resources Division, Alberta Culture, 1975), passim; Interview with Judy Gschossmann.

[33] J. F. Conway, The West: The History of a Region in Confederation (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1983), p. 36. In fact, there were only about 10,000 acres of farmland under cultivation in the whole of the North West Territories including present-day Saskatchewan in 1881.

[34] Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1982), p. 124.

[35] For example, look to the area west of Calgary dealt with in Evelyn Buckley, ed., Chaps and Chinooks: A History West of Calgary 2 vols. (Calgary: Foothills Historical Society, 1976).

[36] For example, look to the irrigated area in southwestern Alberta dealt with in E. Ellerman, ed., Tilley Trails and Tales (Tilley, Alberta: Tilley Historical Society, 1980)

[37] The overall average is 381 family accounts. Prior to 1973, the figure is much smaller: 211 and after 1973 the volumes average at 517 family stories.

[38] Some accounts are no more than a single sentence; some are several pages. The average would seem to be about six paragraphs in length.

THE FRONTIER, THE INDIVIDUAL, AND THE FAMILY

North American society has long been convinced that the frontier was a special place and that the people who chose to live outside of established areas were, somehow, important beyond their immediate sphere. In his examination of this intellectual tradition, Ray Allen Billington suggests that the ideal of the pioneer yeoman was present when the United States were shaping their republic in 1776.[1] Certainly Frederick Jackson Turner gave it a powerful expression when he characterized western frontiersmen for the American Historical Association in 1893:

> That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good or for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom - these are the traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.[2]

The Canadian experience of the frontier does not exactly parallel that of the Americans nor does our historical concept of it. For the most part, however, we have adopted and modified American notions to suit our somewhat different past. We do not, for example, have much of a tradition about the "Wild West" and, in fact, tend to emphasize our orderly pattern of settlement. Nonetheless, Canadians, like Americans, see the western frontier as a catalyst in establishing our national character. Even W. L. Morton, one of our most forceful exponents of Canadian uniqueness, is in substantial agreement with this basic concept of the frontier. In his view, it was the northern environment and the deliberate choice of its "harder life and smaller material rewards" that influenced Canadian character.[3] This emphasis on willingness to suffer for a perceived good is a less flamboyant statement than Turner's but it is nonetheless an endorsement of the primacy of the frontier.

Fictional accounts of the North American West and its early exploiters parallel the historiographical tradition. In fact, because their purpose is to evoke an emotional response, such works tend to contain clearer imagery and can, therefore, provide a useful tool for defining the nature of the perceptions of the frontier. Henry Nash Smith in his study, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth, examines the development, over the course of the nineteenth century of a mythology about yeomen in American writing. Among the numerous traits which came to be a part of the myth, he identifies a sense of independence based on the ownership of land[4] and a social egalitarianism, "in which class stratification was of minor importance."[5] Smith's work considers materials written prior to the time when Turner's thesis was presented but which obviously foreshadowed Turnerian themes. Many of his ideas are adopted by Nicholas Karolides in The Pioneer in the American Novel, 1900-1950. Karolides identifies several classifications within the generic term "pioneer". The settler/farmer group are depicted in the novels he studies as strong and possessed of practical ability.[6] Fulfillment could be achieved by them only through building a solid family and by continuing hard work. The defining characteristic of the fictional pioneer of the early twentieth century was his desire for independence.[7]

As is the case with factual historical writing, there are some differences in Canadian and American pioneers in fiction. Laurence Ricou, in his study of Canadian prairie fiction, identifies the physical environment and human responses to it as the dominant features in his material:

> ...the image of man as a vertical intrusion in a horizontal world is primary. The implications of being a solitary figure raised above a flat and uninterrupted landscape are many, and it is by variations on this basic image that the writer can explore his characters and the impact which a distinctive terrain makes upon them.[8]

Ricou traces a literary tradition wherein man and his environment are increasingly disharmonious; where the feeling of isolation increases. This imagery tends to be less optimistic than that in American novels, but in it the sense of the pioneer as a strong individual is heightened by his aloneness. Ricou also deals with a body of romantic and melodramatic prairie fiction in which the physical environment highlights the virtues and stature of the pioneer.[9] Although these works are held to be less significant from a literary point of view, they still contribute to the prevailing concept of frontier character.

The recent surge of interest in the pioneer era by popular and amateur historians in Alberta is a part of the North American historical and literary tradition outlined above. Their perceptions of the Alberta frontier and the men, women, and families who came to it as settlers form the subject of the ensuing chapter.

> Many of the settlers who moved north, into what is now central Alberta, came from Russia, Poland, Hungary and Romania. Their native countries were overcrowded. Though some people were very rich, most were very poor. Their farms were so small that they could barely feed their own families. How would their children manage to make a living when they grew up? Letters from families who had already moved away to faraway Canada said that there was free land enough for everybody. They wrote about huge forests and freedom in their new country. Canada sounded like a land of promise.[10]

Alberta as escape and Alberta as opportunity are the two contexts in which amateur and popular historians choose to remember the motivations of the pioneers for coming here. The passage above features escape from countries which lacked the means to supply the basic physical requirements of their citizens. Alberta, by contrast, we are told, could not only offer the potential for their fulfillment, but could do so bountifully. Such references to the poverty of the old country are most common in accounts of families who came from continental Europe.[11] Pioneers from Britain, the United States, and eastern Canada are more commonly held to have come to Alberta, not to increase potential for actual subsistence, but because their native regions suffered from conditions which restricted opportunities for prosperity.[12] Certain individuals are remembered as having left their old homes to escape from specific problems rather than general conditions - the memory of a wife's death,[13] the Irish civil war,[14] or the effects of a series of blizzards and droughts.[15] It is an essential part of the common perception of the Alberta frontier that those suffering from misfortune, whatever its manifestation, were given the chance to better their situations.

Pioneer ancestors are remembered as having left behind the stifling atmosphere of convention-bound societies as well as physical hardships. A man might have come in answer to "the call of the north,"[16] or have sought the freedom of a healthy outdoor life in open spaces.[17] In the very newness of the province, adventurous men and their families are said to have found a welcome challenge.[18] Nothing was given to them; they were forced to recognize opportunity for themselves and to be resourceful and independent in exploiting it. In all of this material there is a sense that Alberta was superior to the points of origin, whatever they were, of the settlers. When they recognized this, they had truly arrived:

> It perhaps reveals our attitude, and our ignorance of our adopted country, that we used the phrase 'when we came to Canada'. It was only after we had developed pride in our progress and some knowledge of our province that we unconsciously started to refer to the time 'when we came to Alberta'.[19]

Implicit in these portrayals of Alberta's challenges and opportunities is the conviction that the most promising men were attracted from older, stagnant societies and then forced to display their best qualities when they got here. The frontier, so depicted, is seen as a filter which purified the stock from which contemporary Alberta is descended.

> The early pioneers were courageous, otherwise they would not have ventured into such wilderness, and hardships with such scant equipment, as no financing could be done until the homestead was proved up three years later. No supplies closer than Vermilion or Islay over hills, bush, creeks and over the Vermilion River, enduring heat, cold, rain, sleet, mosquitoes and flies. Taking a day to go and a day to come back often driving oxen.[20]

From even a passage as brief as the one above, the reader begins to get a feeling for the prevailing perceptions of frontier character. The writer specifically mentions the courage of his subjects but he also credits them with the capability to do for themselves everything needed to establish their homesteads and a sense of independence which made them willing to take on the task. The authors of general histories, memoirs, biographies, and local histories all tend to make these assumptions about pioneer society as a whole but they also attribute more specific characteristics to different groups within that society. They perceive the family to have been the most important social unit on the frontier and devote much of their attention to the male heads of pioneer families.

No single image of the family man/pioneer can be said to emerge out of the literature under study. However, some characteristics do seem dominant in the literature. The attribute most commonly cited is a willingness to work hard and it is frequently emphasized by detailed descriptions of the conditions with which the pioneer had to cope:

> The bush land had to be cleared. This was done with axe and grub hoe, and horse power was used to pull out stumps. It was a back-breaking task, but, like most pioneers, he was not afraid of hard work. Bit by bit, he wrested good farming land out of the virgin bush. His first crop, oats, was seeded by hand broadcasting. When the grain matured, he cut it with a scythe.[21]

In other cases, diligence may simply appear in a list of personal qualities,[22] may be shown in a comparison between the frontier period and the present[23] or between a successful pioneer and his neighbours.[24] In whatever way it is expressed, devotion to hard work is always seen as having been positive, even when it was carried to the extreme which earned a man the title of "work-aholic".[25]

Descriptions of hard work have become increasingly important in the local histories of the last two decades. In accounts written before 1967, personal qualities are usually listed and illustrated with a couple of short anecdotes. Later accounts also give detailed descriptions of particular farm operations, especially those connected with breaking and harvesting.[26] Two factors may contribute to this change in approach: most of the district histories are in celebration of some anniversary - the national centennial, a town or community anniversary, or the provincial seventy-fifth anniversary and many of them received outside funding, particularly those written after 1973 which, as noted earlier, were eligible for Historical Publications

Assistance Program dollars. Thus, the histories written after 1967 and the accounts which comprise them are longer, giving more room for detail. The second and perhaps more significant reason for the increase in emphasis on hard work and hardship is the perception often held by family biographers that technological advance has contributed to the decay of society. There is a sense among the authors raised under frontier conditions and now elderly, that a detailed record of the experiences which demonstrate their capacity to endure must be set out for the benefit of the younger, less hardy, generation:

> Times were hard, and many difficulties had to be met. Looking back however, I believe that people were better able to face difficulties than young folks are today, as they were not accustomed to easy living.[27]

While hard work and the capacity for enduring hardships are recognized as having been the keys to success on the frontier, there is also a group of qualities that often appear as corollaries. If a homesteader was to meet all the challenges he is held to have faced, he needed to be determined, resilient, and optimistic. One entry features a man who patiently endured crop failures his first three years and was rewarded by at least satisfactory yields the rest of his farming days.[28] This is an extreme example of the value of these virtues but not outside the prevailing tradition. Other pioneers were simply able to pick up land abandoned by less persevering members of the community[29] or to prove wrong the dire predictions of doubters.[30] A small but significant group were able to overcome handicaps - anything from inexperience to missing limbs - because they were possessed of the will to succeed.[31]

The writers of local history and pioneer biography clearly perceive the financial requirements of starting a frontier farming operation, and, in fact, tend to emphasize the degree to which settlers were cash-poor on arrival. The time between arrival and the sale of a substantial crop could be years in length, particularly in treed areas where clearing was a prerequisite to planting. The farm and the family had expenses but, without outside funds, no income. This situation gave rise to the practice of "working out" in which the man found winter employment and left his wife and children to care for the farm. This phenomenon receives a substantial amount of attention and versatility in finding such employment is much lauded. Earlier accounts, the authors of which normally belong to the generation that settled the province or to the one that grew up under frontier conditions, seem to place greater emphasis on the importance of "working out" and flexibility in work skills than do later ones.[32] It would be too much to say that this practice is disappearing from the folk memory of frontier conditions, but it assumes an increasingly less significant role.

The value of versatility on the frontier is given its fullest expression in narratives of innovative pioneers. The conditions encountered on the Canadian prairies gave rise to a need for new farming techniques; the combination of climate and soil type produce an environment that was outside the experience of most settlers. In "Forging the Western Tradition," Paul Voisey has documented the popularity in southern Alberta communities of educational programs designed to train farmers in techniques believed to be suitable to conditions in the area.[33] In the popular histories written over the last four decades, these programs appear almost to have been forgotten. A much more common method of accounting for the pioneer's ability to cope with his new surroundings is to regard him as an innovator:

> Our Grandfather became well known for his long hair which hung in ringlets down to his shoulders, and his famous rhubarb "Pie Plant." Grandfather had the only "horse power" grinder in the community. This was powered by one or two horses which travelled in a circle, and many of the neighbors made use of it. It also enabled him to become one of the most successful hog raisers in the country. The rod weeder, as we know it, had not been invented, but Grandfather had conceived the idea and built a machine consisting of several shoes, actually like small sleigh runners with a rod running through them.[34]

The physical oddity of "Grandfather" in this passage is somewhat unusual but that is all that sets it aside from a common message. Nearly every community is held to have been home to several inventors of farm machinery,[35] breeders of new animal or crop strains,[36] and creators of household labour-saving devices.[37] The emphasis on original thought by individuals rather than problem-solving by educators is a strong expression of an ideal of self-sufficiency. There is, however, an additional possible interpretation of the attention given to inventiveness. It indicates a devotion to the concept of progress on the part of the writers who praise not only the creators of new equipment and crops, but also the introducers of existing technology and practices. "Firsts" are invariably noted in local histories, most especially the first to own an automobile,[38] the first to acquire a threshing machine,[39] and the first to produce a harvest of a staple crop.[40] The progressive individual is presented as an asset to the community as well as a successful frontiersman.

Devotion to the ideal of progress, however, is not universal. There are a small number of biographers who give positive accounts of men who resisted mechanization and remained devoted to horse-power and the old ways.[41] No suggestion is made that these individuals were being practical; rather, the writers seem to find a quaint sort of charm in such conservatism. It may also be seen as a reflection of the nostalgic and sentimental trend current over the last several years.

The paragon of prairie settlers had the capacity not only to do his own work, but to help others with theirs. In addition to the cooperative and communal efforts which will be dealt with in the next chapter, family biographers devote significant space to more individualized help.[42] This is usually presented as aid to newcomers or victims of some disaster by an established community member. One such account details a large-scale rancher feeding the starving cattle of his less fortunate neighbour; he refused payment and would not accept a return favour.[43] In another entry, the author explains how his father gave assistance to anyone who needed it, but would not accept help when constructing new buildings.[44] The lack of reciprocity in these arrangements suggests that cooperation is not their focus; rather, it is the capability and generosity of the subjects that are being affirmed.

The theme of generosity is expressed in ways other than the donation of time and effort to help a neighbour. There is, for example, the case of the man who was prevented from becoming wealthy by his philanthropy to newcomers,[45] or that of the farmer who doubled as a Justice of the Peace and gave his services free of charge to those in need.[46] The gift of financial aid to less successful settlers is seen as having been a legitimate, even praiseworthy activity for a frontier ancestor. However, one rarely finds an account written by a family member which mentions receipt of such charity.

The pioneer is said to have given of himself in another way, by entertaining those around him with his musical talent or his gift for telling a good story.[47] This activity might have taken place at an organized event like a dance or concert but it is commonly discussed as a spontaneous occurrence in the home of a neighbour. Items of this nature seldom appear in histories written before 1970 and are most common in those done after 1975. Initally this seems out of keeping with the increasing emphasis on the nature of frontier hardships. Although there is an element of frivolity in these entertainment stories, there is also another aspect of the self-sufficiency ideal. The pioneer did not need television or other modern contrivances to occupy his leisure hours; in this as in more crucial areas he had his own resources and he shared them with others. Moreover, he spent his recreational time in a highly social fashion which the writers find more acceptable than many of our current forms of entertainment.

Pioneer morality has received a lot of attention in popular writing and on television. The reader, therefore, approaches local histories and memoirs with the expectation that virtues like honesty, sobriety, and sexual continence will be cited as attributes of family men. The reader will not be dissappointed. One man is remembered as having tried to "sow his wild oats," but lacked the knowledge to do so.[48] Alcohol appears occasionally in family biographies, but it is said to have been used in moderation. The odd instance of drunkenness, we are told, occurred in celebration of a special event:

> The night I was born, (April 9, 1909) it snowed so hard that the one-board crossing on the creek through town, was snowed over. Father, apparently "well-oiled" to celebrate the new heir, missed the bridge and fell into the icy water. Dr. Rose had more trouble with him than with me.[49]

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police also make occasional appearances in the histories but not usually to control crime in the community. Rather, they stop by to ensure that all is well[50] or they pass through in pursuit of an outside criminal.[51] This solid front on the issue of morality throws into startling relief occasional accounts in which seeming dishonesty is praised:

> Rollie Ramsey was unable to get his 30 acres under cultivation. So when the government man was coming out, he plowed around a 30 acre piece of land so that when he was asked how much land was broken he could truthfully say he had plowed around 30 acres of land.
>
> Then the requirements of "proving up" on their land was changed so that each homesteader was to have at least 10 head of cattle. Well most farmers had only one milk cow, so when the government man was coming out, several farmers would get together and put all their cattle on one farm so they would have 10 head of cattle to qualify.[52]

This passage in no way castigates the perpetrators as dishonest or immoral - it views their cleverness with amused admiration. Two explanations of this apparent contradiction can be made: first, the regulation which was being flouted ran counter to prevailing and, therefore, presumably sensible practices; second, the homestead inspector being tricked was an outside authority figure, and the trickery was directed against the authority he represented not against him as an individual. In both cases, the inspector's actions constituted a challenge to the independence of the pioneers and are, therefore, seen by the writers to have been illegitimate.

There is also a sense of fundamental honesty in instances of prima facie dishonesty:

> Realizing he would require two more horses to cut his crop, he watched the Olds News Telegram. There was his answer, "Four lost broncs, $10.00 reward. Phone Three Hills." Four broncs were found by Mr. Bishop; two of which he used to cut his crop and two he lent to Ben Cool. Cutting a crop was difficult. The first trips in the field were corner to corner rather than around the outside and bundles were scattered everywhere. Once the crop had been taken care of, Mr. Bishop called the Three Hills number and reported his find. The $10.00 reward was used to pay for the repairs on his binder.[53]

Initially it seems that Mr. Bishop's actions ran counter to the morality that popular historians assert was so much a part of the frontier. However, no one really suffered from his actions and he shared the benefits with a neighbour. The reader is told that the horses were necessary for the success of his farming operation, but getting them did not mean a lessening of the hard work required for that success. Finally, Mr. Bishop exercised a certain amount of ingenuity in taking advantage of an opportunity. The combination of these factors turns a seeming infraction of society's rules into a clever bending of them to serve a praiseworthy goal.

The pioneers in novels, at least in the United States, are set apart by their physical size.[54] They tend to be large, stocky, and massively strong. The authors in community histories do not have the same avenues open to them in all cases; because they deal with real individuals remembered by the community, and because they attempt to be truthful, only those of genuinely remarkable stature are likely to be credited with same. Even so, references to size are surprizingly rare. An emphasis on strength and athleticism seems to have taken the place in the popular histories that size occupies in novels. Strength and endurance are normally discussed in relation to the subject's ability to accomplish work.[55] Athletic prowess reportedly came to the fore most commonly on the district baseball team,[56] but other team sports,[57] and individual activities[58] do receive some attention. At times, as in the following passage, physical endurance and ability provided their own rewards:

> ...he went to file on his homestead in Red Star. Another fellow was also interested in the land and he went down to Peace River on horseback. Dan went on foot - running most of the way, the day before this man. All he had to eat was a handful of oatmeal and some saskatoons from the side of the road. He made it down Brick's Hill and asked for a meal, but they said they didn't serve meals, so Dan kept going. He made it to the courthouse in time to file before the other man showed up.[59]

The importance of strength and good physical condition to success on a frontier farm is obvious even in cases where it provided less explicitly stated advantages than in the passage above.

The image of the pioneer that has been discussed in the last few pages is highly uniform. To some degree, the existence of a common representation has been exaggerated. In memoirs and biographies there is a tendency to present family men as having had human foibles. Such diverse and trivial flaws as a fear of heights,[60] a bad temper accompanied by a profane tongue,[61] and a belief in personal psychic powers[62] appear in these books. In part, this may simply be attributed to the greater length devoted to any given individual in a biography as opposed to the treatment in a family contribution to a community history. Such anecdotes may reflect a desire to add interest and humour to the more lengthy biographies. However, the differences in the intended audiences for the two types of book may also be significant here. The author who contributes to the local history will have to live with the judgement that the community might make about his family; the one who writes a biography or autobiography has the benefit of a more remote readership.

The generational filter alluded to earlier seems also to affect the uniformity of the image of family men in community histories. While it would be stretching the point to suggest that the percentage of pioneer/authors in a book could be correlated to the degree of variation in the portrayal of character, earlier district histories are more diverse in their depictions. Thus, although the uncle who kept getting "discouraged and disgusted" and moving his family,[63] or the man who took a casual attitude toward marriage[64] are atypical, they do not stand out in publications of the 1960s as they would in ones of the 1970s. One reason for this shift, the increasing distance of more recent writers from the frontier experience, has already been noted. As well, the growth of uniformity may be a self-perpetuating process; as more district histories are produced, ideas of what the pioneer experience was like solidify in the minds of the writers. One can postulate that family biographers who rely on stories from parents and grandparents rather than personal experiences are particularly subject to such outside influences.

In spite of such exceptions and variations, which are relatively few in number, the portrayal of pioneer family men remains overwhelmingly positive. The following account of a pioneer father is unusual in giving explicit expression to the ideal, but the same qualities emerge out of the anecdotes told in most narratives:

> It is certain that he had very little in the way of funds and no friends to help him when he arrived in a new and strange part of the world. What he did have was a strong body, equally strong character, and an adventurous spirit and a burning ambition and willingness to work. These were the qualities that most of the pioneers of the West possessed or they would not have been able to survive.[65]

The strong and orthodox qualities of husbands, fathers, and grandfathers are highlighted by the juxtaposition of a less admirable male image. Pioneer bachelors are common figures in every community history, but they exist outside the main trend of the perceived frontier experience. The existence of the community which produces the history is dependent on family units and the rearing of new community members, a process from which bachelors are excluded. Kai T. Erikson has identified the need of any society to define itself and its standards of acceptable behavior by defining deviant behavior. In Wayward Puritans, his study of seventeenth century Massachusetts, he explains the heresy and witchcraft crises as necessary affirmations of conformity within the rest of the community.[66] The role assigned to bachelors in district histories is similar although it happens in retrospect. By assigning aberrant qualities to a group which was by its very nature not a full partner in the common experience, the positive and homogenous character of the rest appears in sharp relief.

When used as foils for family men, bachelors appear in three major guises - the weird, the wicked, and the ridiculous. Men in the first of these categories engaged in a host of activities of which some were anti-social but most were simply unusual. The reader of popular histories quickly gathers the impression that unmarried men lived in conditions which were, at best, squalorous. At times, this was due to bad housekeeping and poor personal hygiene,[67] but it might also be attributed to such oddities as living in a lean-to off of a horse barn,[68] or having a cow for a roommate.[69] The cooking enjoyed by these gentlemen was of a like standard. Virtually every local history features at least one household shared by a group of single men wherein the reported fare was such that the reader wonders how they survived. The following is quite typical:

> The big fellow that was cooking the biscuits said I had better have a bite to eat with them, and I was quite agreeable to that. He got a big dishpan out and went to work - put some flour and water in there and grease and baking powder. He rolled his sleeves up and went right at it. So about that time I guess he thought he ought to

> build the fire up a little and he went over to the stove and dove into the sack there. He had quite hairy arms on him and he dived in there and got two arms full of buffalo chips out and dumped them into the stove and right back into the flour. He forgot to brush the buffalo chips off his arms. Kind of spoiled my appetite.[70]

The occasional bachelor who is credited with any cooking skills was usually capable of a limited range of very basic dishes, coffee and bannock being two such examples.[71]

Oddity of the sort noted above is presented as a source of amusement, or to astound the modern audience, but it can take a more serious form. Certain bachelor activities were a threat to the community and tend to be castigated sharply. Single men, unlike their married fellows, are often characterized as "drunks". This vice rendered them unproductive and could lead to their death or dependence on others.[72] The only members of a community likely to have a still were bachelors. Some narrators regard this propensity with a certain amount of amusement,[73] but even so, it sets the group apart as having been irresponsible. Most of the other vices open to the resident of a frontier community - poker playing,[74] tobacco use,[75] nude bathing,[76] and dishonesty[77] - receive similar treatment. They are presented as having been the nearly exclusive prerogative of single men and the attitude taken by the writers ranges from joviality to disgust and condemnation.

One of the most serious offences these men could commit was, seemingly, to oppose the formation of a school district. After nine school-age children were present in a district, the rate-payers could vote to petition the authorities for the creation of a school district. Bachelors were at least ostensibly childless and, if a district contained a large percentage of them and they voted against the expense of a school, the process could be delayed. The community evidently felt justified in retaliating:

> Around 1906 the families in the district held a meeting with a view to forming a school district. How, as the lone bachelor, opposed the movement. In keeping with the humour of the times the school district was formed and became Howe School District No. 1371. The spelling with the addition of the letter "E" was deliberate, as How's objection to a misspelling of his name was well-known.[78]

Similarly, bachelors are often criticized for leaving; for failing to stay with the developing community. Such men tend to be characterized as "drifters" who proved up on their homesteads and then sold out.[79] Revealingly, families who did the same thing usually receive much more matter-of-fact and less critical treatment.

Bachelors as buffoons add more than a little colour to local histories and memoirs. Reportedly, personal quirks, ineptitude, and misfortune conspired to keep whole communities laughing at single men. The fellow who grew a lovely flower garden and hosted the Ladies' Aid seems to have been regarded as an amiable oddity.[81] The one who smoked raw Ontario tobacco which he purchased in long ropes simply earned himself the nickname "Long Green" derived from his favorite smoke.[82] Still another was humoured by a community which laughed behind his back:

> He even had a nickname for his rifle - Laughing Betsy. He used Laughing Betsy quite frequently and sometimes with dastardly results. Upon arrival at his homestead one morning, he showed us a piece of paper with drops of blood on it. Apparently the previous night he'd heard noises outside, and, thinking someone was trying to steal his turkeys, had rushed out with Laughing Betsy and dashed off some shots in the general direction of the noises. The next morning he'd collected his "proof". Of course no one dared count his turkeys.[83]

The entire focus of a bachelor's existence is presented as having been less serious than that of a family man. While the community has a stake in the behavior of the latter - the progenitor of community members - it can afford to view the gyrations of the former with a superior sort of amused tolerance. Of course, not all bachelors were fools or villains. There is a tendency, however, when citing cases of bachelors who were capable, responsible, and diligent, for authors to suggest that this was true in spite of their single status.[84]

Cowboy bachelors appear in local histories and especially in memoirs and popular general histories as a group apart from either family men or the bachelors of the farming frontier discussed above. They share, albeit in an exaggerated form, some of the qualities of both categories. The ideal of capable, independent men finds some of its strongest expressions in anecdotes about them but so too does the sense of bachelor irresponsibility.

Most references to cowboys appear in memoirs and general histories of the province; relatively few are contained in community histories. This is undoubtedly due, at least in part, to a settlement pattern in which early ranching areas were taken over by grain growers, the families of whom contribute to the local history books. In spite of this, and perhaps because of their very unfamiliarity, cowboys have come in for an unduly large share of the biographies published.[85] In Grant MacEwan's *Fifty Mighty Men*, eleven of the chosen subjects were involved in some aspect of agriculture in Alberta and, of these, seven were associated with ranching. Men like Tom Lynch, cattle drover extraordinary; John Ware, negro cowboy of outstanding ability; and Sir John Lister Kaye, visionary who even failed on a grand scale, all attract the sort of attention that wheat farmers, having come in droves to neatly surveyed plots, can not. James MacGregor, whose *A History of Alberta* is the most complete survey of the province's history available, openly expresses the sense of awe about the character of the ranching frontier:

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> Never in Canada's history has there been an era so romantic as that of the early ranching days in Alberta's foothills. Begotten of English dams by American fathers and suckled on the grasses of the glorious chinook belt, ranching grew to be a way of life never duplicated in any other time or area. Sired by the great cowboy era in the western states, it inherited its language and its trappings from its father. Out of Britain's Victorian era - a mother, who, crossing the ocean (bringing her culture, her money, and often her cattle with her) embraced the magnificence of the chinook belt and then insisted on operating a ranche (with an e) - this hybrid filled a lusty span of twenty years of Alberta's history - and Alberta's exclusively.[86]

Not surprisingly, the portrayal of the men who worked the ranch lands is as colourful as that of the era. We are told that the cowboy worked hard; he slept on the ground much of the time and started the day "with the chill of dawn in his bones,"[87] his hours were long and his pay poor,[88] he contended with impossible blizzard conditions to save the animals in his charge,[89] and his skill level with a horse had to be outstanding rather than simply good.[90] In consideration of these qualities, the memorialists are quick to forgive hard drinking,[91] boasting, and squandering of pay.[92] Such incidents as the riding of horses into bars are passed over as the deserved recreation of so dynamic a group.[93] Cowboys comprise a very small part of the subject matter in Alberta popular history and tend to be restricted as to the type of literature in which they appear. Nonetheless, one gains a strong impression of them as larger-than-life figures in the writing and, in fact, one tends to exaggerate the role they play in it.

If bachelors appear in popular historical writing as contrasting with family men, another group has a more complementary role. Women are seen as the other half of the great partnership that was repeated again and again across the frontier, which made productive the soil and created civilized society. Pioneer women are depicted as having been a more homogenous group than are men. To an overwhelming degree, adult women appear in the histories in the role of wife and mother. The single female schoolteachers who taught in virtually every community are normally mentioned only under the heading of the school. Only those who married into the district and adopted the standard family role, as indeed, many seem to have done, receive attention in community histories as people rather than as fulfillers of a task. While discussing the typical prairie community, C. A. Dawson and Eva R. Younge in Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process, stress the importance of the district nurse in terms both of health care and social development.[94] Their contentions are echoed in While Rivers Flow, the memoirs of a district nurse who served in several newly settled areas around this province. However, with the exception of this one book, there is not more than an occasional passing reference to the existence, much less the work, of these professional and usually unmarried women.

Like their husbands, pioneer wives are praised for their capacity for hard work, but this is not the quality which emerges as dominant in the writings about them. The idealized frontierswoman is best described by the words "willing" and "capable". Whatever her situation and however big the transition she had to make from her previous home, we are told that she coped and that she improved the quality of life for those around her while she did so. This achievement is most commonly expressed by lists of the wide-ranging tasks at which a female ancestor excelled:

> Catherine Garner loved the land and spent many

> hours in the fields helping with haying and harvesting. She enjoyed being with and helping with the animals, milking the cows and looking after her "pride and joy", the chickens. Her hands were often busy crocheting and she cared for many house plants. She was skilled with needle and thread and used her sewing machine to advantage.
>
> She was a good neighbour and all who asked knew her help would not be refused. She was a member of St. Matthew's parish from 1915 and attended church regularly and enjoyed the brunch held afterwards.[95]

Other women are remembered for specific abilities. The woman who did most of the lathing on her house while the men were in the fields,[96] the one who improvised a spinning wheel from a cream separator,[97] and the one who used her broom to put out a fire in her sod roof while her husband and son ran about frantically outside[98] are not unusual.

Almost any skill is considered to have enhanced a woman's value as a pioneer, but two particular areas seem to merit special attention - good cooking and good gardening. While bachelors who could cook are usually held to have had a limited repertoire, frontier housewives were more versatile. They might have had specialties but we are told that they set a good table year round[99] and often put on a feast for the threshing crew in the fall.[100] The importance assigned to gardening ~~is~~ closely related - women supplied food as well as preparing it.[101] Occasionally the close relationship between women and the family diet is carried even further by the presentation of women as hunters and fishermen.[102] The most obvious and probably the most important reason for the emphasis on women in connection with family nourishment is that the production and preparation of good food affected every member of every pioneer household every day. This explanation is not entirely satisfactory, however, as the same could be said for other household tasks performed by women. Food is a universal; both on the frontier and today it is an essential component of our physical survival and our sensual pleasure. Pioneer women, then, when presented as the authors of these benefits, are being given a key role in making the family unit independent.

Widows, we are told, often carried on alone in a homestead venture or even came out to begin it after the death of their husbands. As they were normally accompanied by a number of children, usually fairly well-grown, they cannot be seen as detracting from the predominance of married women noted earlier. Widows were successful pioneers. Local histories seemingly do not recount the stories of those who tried and failed. The importance of varied skills and the capacity to use them is highlighted by the very situation of these women, but the language used to describe their feats does not tend to be dramatic.[103] In fact, the reader is less likely to encounter detailed accounts of capability in these biographies than in ones of ordinary women. The matter-of-fact tone is used as a device, perhaps unconsciously, to instill the notion that the widow's workload was disposed of with unflurried practicality.

It would be easy to exaggerate the uniformity of the portrayal of women as capable challengers of frontier conditions. They do, however, appear in situations where they had to be rescued from natural disasters and they are held to have feared aspects of their unfamiliar environment.[104] Men are often given the role of their rescuers, either by explaining away ignorance or by providing physical assistance:

> [Two adult women] could see flames as well as smoke; and to their horror, they realized the whole country was on fire. The heavy grass grew without a break right up to the log walls of the house, which stood on a rise; the only water within reach was at the bottom of a deep well one hundred yards from the house. The poor girls and the children were horrified; they had not the least notion what to do when, to their immense relief, George, the eldest Beaton son, came tearing up on horseback, jumped off, called for a pail and any old sacks or heavy cloths, filled the pail, ran back to the house and set fire to grass near the house and kept it under control by beating it out with the wet sacks when it threatened to fire the house. Terrified children were in the house; wife and sister had to help fight the fire. They had a sufficient fire-break only just in time. Thank God for a man like good old George.[105]

Nor are women criticized if they did not endure the crudeness of the frontier on first contact. A husband and his sons who came out ahead of wife and daughters to prepare at least minimal housing is a common story in district histories.[106] Also, while women travelled in the relatively fast and comfortable railway colonist cars, men rode with the stock and equipment that came in as settlers' effects. To this limited extent, women are seen as having required protection and pampering.

Women came to the frontier because of the men to whom they were married. The popular histories do not credit women with having had the sense of adventure which brought their husbands to Alberta. They simply followed and were often hampered in the performance of their tasks by initial ignorance and distressed at the hardships they encountered. Women who gave into these problems and refused to adjust are despised by the local historians.[107] Such accounts seem almost to suggest that these women failed because they were too selfish to make the effort of will necessary to succeed. In contrast, the ones who stayed and learned frontier skills or who cheerfully accepted appalling and unfamiliar conditions earn more praise even than those who, from the start, embodied the ideal pioneer spirit.[108] This sort of account carries a feeling that these women passed a test that was set for them and that success in supporting husband and family was its own sufficient reward. There is also, however, a sense that they nobly sacrificed their own comfort for the goals of their husbands. Although the reward for such self-denial in the following selection is more tangible than usual, the sentiments expressed are common:

> Now that they were at this fateful point in their career, [Mother] wondered if going back to England was the right thing to do. After all, the worst was over; and Dad was obviously depressed at the prospect. How he had loved his freedom - his homestead...Many years later, when in Hazel Bluff Cemetery Dad erected Mother's tombstone, it bore the simple inscription,"Ruth I-16." My readers will remember the words: "For whither thou goest, I will go..."[109]

The theme of feminine suffering and sacrifice on the frontier extends beyond the local histories and memoirs. A Harvest Yet to Reap and The Last Best West, two recently published collections, the former of documents and the latter of oral reminiscences, both edited with a heavy feminist slant, perpetuate the same notion. Women, they suggest, came to the West to be wives and spent their days almost as servants to their husbands and families.[110] As they find no virtue in such suffering and think that women were cheated out of their rightful expectations, the editors of both of these works differ considerably from other amateur historians in their perspective if not in the facts they employ.

If men had the physical ability and mental attitudes which were necessary for success under pioneer conditions, we are told that their wives were possessed of as much or more strength of character. Wives and mothers created homes and maintained them in the absence of their husbands. Other than the concrete results of housewifely skill, there are seldom any details about the manner in which women achieved this sense of "homey-ness". Descriptions of them as "the family's mainstay,"[111] "the backbone of the family,"[112] or "the heart and soul of our family,"[113] suggest that personal strength rather than just specific talents are considered to have been fundamental to the feminine capacity to make a new home. Women, we are told, were also prepared to offer some of the benefits of home life to bachelor neighbours and passers by. The most common illustration of this is the offering of food and hospitality to newcomers,[114] but "mothering" young bachelors also receives some attention.[115] While this sort of generosity is part of the broader western myth, it may be seen as a way of emphasizing a woman's talents in her main sphere - her home. Just as a man's self-sufficiency is highlighted by his having had the time to help others complete their work, a woman's abilities to make a home are brought into sharper focus by her extension of its comforts to others:

> Busy as Mrs. Cameron was, she found time to "mother" all the young bachelors. Many the pound of butter, loaf of bread and jar of milk and cream she insisted on handing out to us chaps. They were luxuries to us at that time and sure were appreciated.[116]

One of the most powerful elements of the frontier myth in Alberta is the tradition which has developed about pioneer women as midwives. Every community history under study here contains at least one reference to amateur midwivery and most contain several. Most districts praise their region's early doctors highly but the reader often wonders why: medical practioners never seem to have been present when children were being born. In most such accounts they are simply not mentioned, but, in some, the doctors are reported to have failed to arrive leaving the delivery to be successfully supervised by a neighbouring woman.[117] In one case the midwife is held to have been of more use than a doctor who "arrived under the influence of alcohol."[118] In some histories there are entries about women who were routinely involved in delivering most of the children in the district:

> She was called upon regularly to assist in delivering the new babies of the community. Her little brown bag was always packed with a clean print dress and white aprons and other necessary items. She would be ready in a very few minutes to travel in the wagon or buggy with a neighbour when he drove rapidly into the yard and announced his wife wished her to come. In many cases she took complete charge of the home, not only did she deliver the baby and care for the mother but the other children had to be fed and kept clean. She did this work willingly and joyfully with little thought of reward.[119]

Most accounts are less elaborate than this as most frontier midwives were less experienced, being, we are told, simply part of an exchange of services with proximate neighbours.[120] In fact, midwivery often appears in a list of other skills - musical talent, good cooking, and weather predicting[121] - - to name a few. Neither the actual task performed by these women nor their failures are detailed. The suggestion, thereby, that such heroics were routine adds to their significance.

The authors of these entries tell us that giving birth without medical assistance was taken for granted by prairie women.[122] The prominent position accorded it, however, suggests that it is regarded by the writers and their contemporaries as an extraordinary process to be involved in, both as midwife and as prospective mother. Pioneer midwivery brings out several themes which run through popular history. It relates very directly to the notion of pioneer independence. Just as men are seen to have bypassed agricultural authorities in the achievement of their goals, so too are local women held to have been a source of natal care superior to that provided by medical authorities. Midwivery also presents women as builders of the community. Child-bearing is a more obvious expression of this theme, but possibilities for discussing it are limited by the size of the family produced by any given woman and by the convention which does not allow the birth process to be discussed. The midwife was a step removed from the seemingly indelicate part of the procedure, and she could be involved in the production of numerous additions to the community. It is impossible to ascertain whether the extent of the practice is actually exaggerated by popular historians. One can suggest, however, that the role of women in this crucial aspect of a community's growth is affirmed by the de-emphasis of the role of doctors.

The moral rectitude of pioneer women is demonstrated in a way quite different from the manner employed in discussing the morality of their husbands. Honesty, chastity, integrity, and like qualities are rarely mentioned in connection with women. They do not need to be - the actions of women demonstrate them and the lack of any reference to female immorality confirms that they had them. In addition, some selections portray women as having been involved in religious activities, either formally, in organized churches,[123] or informally, through private prayer.[124] While religion and immorality are not necessarily completely divorced, a biographer who uses some of his brief space to discuss the piety of his subject is unlikely to believe that she was guilty of serious impropriety.

The prevailing image of women that emerges from popular histories of Alberta's frontier share many characteristics of saints and martyrs. The woman in the following poetic selection demonstrates many of these qualities:

Pioneer Prairie Mother

She made a home from walls of sod;
She swept a puncheon floor;
She planted morning-glory vines
In a riot near the door.
She kept a rifle on the wall
In easy reach and prayed
That she might never take it down
Through fear of Indian raid.

All night she heard the lonely wind,
The coyote's mournful tune,
As ghostly, crouching haunches
Squatted there against the moon.
She saw the silent shadow
Of a lone wolf in the rocks
Down by the stream where she must go
To wash and sun her crocks.

She watched the clouds for signs of rain;
She prayed for drought to cease
She covered chicks from blowing sand
And rendered possum grease.
She put her children's tears to rout
With hero tales she knew;
She taught them from the Holy Book,
As mind and bodies grew.

And this the living harvest yield
Implanted through her toil;
The rich red-blooded men of faith
Who sprang from prairie soil.
She only made a prairie home;
She swept a puncheon floor;
She mothered God's nobility -
How could she give us more?
-Vera Holding[125]

As is the case with this "pioneer prairie mother" most women are not depicted as "ladies", a group who make rare appearances as entertaining spectacles or unsuccessful pioneers.[126] The wives, mothers, and grandmothers who appear in family biographies were earthy figures: they worked hard, they were practical, and their appearance was unimportant. Unlike the adventurous, driving men to whom they were married, female pioneers are credited with having had very few personal ambitions. We are told that they were good, kind, dependable, and even courageous and clever, but they were not dynamic. It is, in part, for this reason that the representation of women is more homogenous than that of men. There are no sub-groups of women who serve as foils for the rest and, over the four decades that the material under study here was written, the portrayal of them has remained relatively static. Women are seen as having had an important role on the frontier and the space devoted to them is accordingly large. In the final analysis, however, their role was a secondary or supporting one and, in consequence, they are presented as a less complex and more predictable group.

Adult women appear in popular histories almost exclusively in the guise of wives and mothers. A significant percentage of them, however, arrived as unmarried daughters of pioneers and grew up or completed their growing up on the Alberta frontier. Many of these women became the brides of young men of similar backgrounds or of the existing bachelor population. The courtship and marriage process entailed therein receives its due share of attention in the biographies and biographical accounts of the resulting families. Courting tends to be portrayed as having been a source of public amusement rather than as a romantic pursuit or a serious attempt to find a compatible spouse. Thus, the man who allowed his employer's small daughter, his informal "helper", to wreak havoc on his careful fencing while he stopped to talk to the object of his affections,[127] and the one who bought a car for courting purposes and sold it when he failed in his objective[128] are representative of a tradition that runs throughout the material. Notably, the man involved is normally the butt of courting stories. While such things fit well with the prevailing treatment of bachelors, appearing foolish or being spurned would not agree with the dominant image of women.

If the business of securing a spouse is regarded with humour, the reasons behind it are not. We are told that a man based his decision to marry on practical foundations - he needed a cook, a helper, or someone to relieve the monotony of "batching". Accordingly he made his selection:

> In 1914 he came to the Olson's place to borrow a wagon, but he found Gudrun Olson standing in the wagon, bare feet, dirty face and hair hanging down to her back side. He claimed it was love at first sight and in 1916 he married Gudrun.[129]

However unattractive she might be considered by today's standards, the author of this passage clearly believes that Gudrun had qualities more suitable to the lifestyle of the frontier. Most examples are not so blatant as this one, but physical beauty and personal charm are almost completely ignored by those who deal with the subject of marriage. The sense that marriage was a pragmatic venture is heightened by numerous accounts which refer to a couple's honeymoon having been spent hard at work on the farm:

> By the spring of 1919 I was tired of batching so my intended came north to join me from Flandreau...We went on a long honeymoon, not to Florida or Niagara Falls, but to the homestead. Of course, my bride really appreciated and blessed those rough floor boards and my homestead shack, but they say, "Marry 'em young, and treat 'em rough if you want a good life." It seemed to work because she stayed with me.[130]

The light-hearted tone of such passages gives the reader the impression that although work was the main order of business in a marriage, there was pleasure in the endurance of poor conditions and the performance of arduous tasks. This theme becomes more pronounced when writers are discussing the functioning of the family on the frontier.

Alberta's amateur historians characterized the frontier family not so much as a social and biological unit but as an economic entity. At times this interpretation is presented very directly and the entire family is remembered as having worked together on a particular project.[131] More commonly, the reader is told that family members, in their separate ways, all contributed to the progress of the farm or ranch. This holds true both for young families[132] and for joint ventures of adult siblings.[133] Entries which mention discord within the unit are rare and become rarer as one investigates new material.[134] The reader is led to believe that shared hardship yielded solidarity:

> ...I have thought many times of those first two years when the five of us [parents and three adult or nearly adult sons] were together on the homestead. What glorious, fateful, rich years they were, in spite of the hardships, self-denials and trials almost past belief, and how closely we were drawn together in our common hopes and fears and sacrifices - "partners," as Lathop said, "in a common task."[135]

Communal effort of this sort is almost invariably said to have led to prosperity which was also enjoyed by the entire family.[136]

If the popular historians are to be believed, the economic roles of individuals within the family were well defined. Women were occupied in the house, the garden, and the chicken coop, men worked in the fields and with the large animals, and children assisted parents when needed but performed most of their tasks in less defined spheres. In most instances when adult men or women are discussed doing jobs outside the normal pattern an explanation is provided. Women who worked in the fields during the peak periods of planting and harvest are usually said to have taken "the place of a man"[137] or to have been lending "a helping hand to the pioneer men."[138] In one such case, the biographer even specifies that his subject continued to wear her long dresses when engaged in field work,[139] presumably thereby preserving her femininity.

The economic activities of children are frequently depicted as having taken place away from the homestead property. They hunted small animals for food and fur,[140] they killed gophers to obtain bounty payments,[141] they picked berries,[142] and they ran errands.[143] Closer to home, they assisted their parents: their mother by churning butter or supplying her with wood and water,[144] and their father by picking rocks or roots in newly cleared fields and watching over pasturing cattle.[145] Such tasks are distinct in type and magnitude from the primary undertakings of homemaking and raising cash crops. The emphasis on children as engaged in minor capacities, therefore, serves to trivialize their roles relative to those of their parents but, at the same time, to involve them in sustaining the family unit. The views which children are thought to have held on the seriousness of the family's pioneering venture also serve to set them apart from adults. Conditions that were hardships to parents are described as having been "larks" or adventures for children.[146] It is interesting to note that this rather frivolous treatment of children, their attitudes, and their activities predominates in the material under study in spite of the fact that most of the authors were children during the frontier era.[147] They choose, however, to cast their parents as the heroes and themselves as useful but trifling adjuncts. Nonetheless, the family unit is seen as having been a strong bond and necessary as both motivation and support for adult pioneers.

The image of the idealized settler on the Alberta frontier is complex; he had the capacity to survive and to succeed in both a physical and a moral sense. Male pioneers are depicted as independent challengers who brought wide-ranging skills to bear in creating a productive place in the wilderness. The emphasis is slightly different with female pioneers. The focus is on their moral strength and willingness to use whatever talents they possessed or could acquire to make possible the achievement of their husbands' goals. This portrayal of individual pioneers is not far removed from that articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner. In both cases, the frontier is defined as a place lacking in external resources to support the efforts of the pioneers; they were either sufficient unto themselves or they did not succeed. However, while Turner sees the wilderness as the creator of frontier character, popular and amateur historians in Alberta see pioneer strengths as having molded the destiny of the province.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1] Ray Allan Billington, America's Frontier Heritage (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), p. 4.

[2] Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), p. 37.

[3] W. L. Morton, The Canadian Identity (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 110.

[4] Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (New York: VIntage Books, 1950), p. 155.

[5] Ibid., p. 156.

[6] Nicholas Karolides, The Pioneer in the American Novel, 1900-1950 (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), pp. 40-41.

[7] Ibid., p. 76.

[8] Laurence Ricou, Vertical Man/Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1973), p. 18.

[9] Ibid., p. 73.

[10] Edna Bakken, Albertans All (Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1980), p. 68.

[11] See for example: Violet Florkewich, John Hrasko, and Allan Olson, eds., Hills of Hope (Spruce Grove, Alberta: Carvel Unifarm, 1976), pp. 355-356; Readymade Historical Society Book Committee, eds., Readymade and District ([Readymade, Alberta]: [Readymade Historical Society], 1977), p. 184.

[12] See for example: St. Lina History Book Committee, eds., St. Lina and Surrounding Area (St. Lina, Alberta: St. Lina History Book Club, 1978), p. 57; C. H. Stout, ed., From Frontier Days in Leduc and District ([Leduc, Alberta]: [n.p.], [1956]), p. 134.

[13] Vera E. Holt, ed., The Lantern Era: A History of Cherhill, Rochfort Bridge, Sangudo and Surrounding School Districts (Sangudo, Alberta: Sangudo and District History Society, 1979), p. 258.

[14] Joan G. Yates and Audrey J. Lowe, eds., Along the Wapiti (Grande Prairie, Alberta: Wapiti River Historical Society, 1981), p. 117.

[15] Vivian Robinson, Mary Goodrich, Barbara Matthews, and Claude May, eds., *Those Years From Rail to Oil: A History of Hardisty and Surrounding Area* (Hardisty, Alberta: Hardisty History Book Committee, 1981), p. 36.

[16] Hec MacLean, ed., *Waterhole and the Land North of the Peace* (Fairview, Alberta: Waterhole Old Timers Association, 1970), p. 6.

[17] See for example: Ruth Thibodeau, ed., *The Moyerton Story* ([n.p.]: [n.p.], [1969]), p. 22; Morrin and District History Book Committee, *Blooming Prairie: A History of Morrin and District* (Morrin, Alberta: Morrin and District History Book Committee, 1970), p. 270; Jessie Browne Raber, *Pioneering in Alberta* (New York: Exposition Press, 1951), p. 9.

[18] See for example: Edgerton and District Historical Society, eds., *The Winds of Change* ([Edgerton, Alberta]: [Edgerton and District Historical Society], [1975]), p. 210; J. G. MacGregor, *North West of 16* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1958), p. 11; Alice A. Campbell, ed., *Milk River Country* (Milk River, Alberta: [Milk River Oldtimers Association], 1959), p. 18.

[19] John H. Blackburn, *Land of Promise*, ed. and intro. John Archer (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970), p. 40.

[20] The Centennial Committee, eds., *In Retrospect, 1967* ([Dewberry, Alberta]: [n.p.], [1967]), p. 199.

[21] Book Committee, Eckville and District Historical Society, eds., *Homesteads and Happiness* (Eckville, Alberta: Eckville and District Historical Society, 1979), pp. 522-523.

[22] See for example: Orvin J. Hicken, Kay B. Redd and John L. Evans, eds., *Roundup: Raymond 1902-1967* (Raymond, Alberta: [Raymond Chamber of Commerce], 1967), p. 283; Centennial Book Committee, eds., *Pioneers Who Blazed the Trail: A History of High Prairie and District* (High Prairie, Alberta: Farm Women's Union of Alberta, High Prairie Local 204, 1968), p. 115; Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 208.

[23] See for example: Gordon P. Puffer, *A Giant Among Pioneers* ([Edmonton]: [Gordon P. Puffer], 1976), p. 25.

[24] See for example: Winnie Moore and Fran Moore, eds., *Across the Smoky* (DeBolt, Alberta: DeBolt and District Pioneer Museum Society, 1978), p. 105.

[25] Vera Holt, p. 678.

[26] See for example: Gwendolyn A. Ross, ed., *A Patchwork of Memories* (Thorsby, Alberta: The Historical Society of Thorsby and District, 1979), p. 923; Donna Chadwick, ed., *Candlelight Years* (Innisfail, Alberta: Innisfail & District Historical Society, "Book Section", 1973), p. 209.

[27] Violet Florkewich et al., p. 377.

[28] Edgerton and District Historical Society, p. 264.

[29] Helen Finstad, Barbara Finstad, Delores Butterwick, and Mildred Nattrass, eds., *Prairie Footprints: A History of the Community in Southern Alberta Known as Pendant d'Oreille* ([n.p.]: Pendant d'Oreille Lutheran Church Women, 1970), p. 236.

[30] Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 572.

[31] See for example: Lillian Bretzlaff and Mildred Hay, eds., *Colinton and Districts: Yesterday & Today* (Colinton, Alberta: [History Book Club], [1980]), p. 124; Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, eds., *Echoes of Fort Assiniboine and Districts* (Fort Assiniboine, Alberta: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, 1982), p.574.

[32] See for example: Jean Chubb and Hilda Milligan, eds., *Leaves of Yesteryear: A History of the Bon Accord District and the Biographies of the Men and Women Who Pioneered the Area* (Bon Accord, Alberta: Farm Women's Union of Alberta, 1969), p. 393; Nose Creek History Book Committee, eds., *The Nose Creek Story From 1792* ([n.p.]: [n.p.], [1962]), p. 47.

[33] Paul Leonard Voisey, "Forging the Western Tradition: Pioneer Approaches to Settlement and Agriculture in Southern Alberta Communities" (PhD. Thesis, Department of History, University of Toronto, 1982), pp. 270-273.

[34] Carmangay Home and School Association, Book Committee, eds., *Bridging the Years: Carmangay and District* (Carmangay, Alberta: Carmangay Home and School Association, 1968), p. 397. It should be noted here that this and some other direct quotations used to illustrate points were taken from volumes other than those used in the study proper. In all cases, they are from works which had been examined before the parameters of the study had been set and seemed too useful in making the point to leave out.

[35] See for example: Ned Dodd, ed., *Remember When: The History of Trochu and District* (Trochu, Alberta: Trochu History Book Committee, 1975), p. 263.

[36] See for example: Evelyn Demorest, Ingrid Sturm, and Doris Fowlie, eds., Golden Memoirs, 1912-1963 ([Empress, Alberta]: [Pioneer Committee], [1963]), p. 121.

[37] See for example: Ned Dodd, p. 207.

[38] See for example: Anne Spreight, ed., Prairie Echoes: Precious Memories of the Former Hillcrest Municipality (Cadogan, Alberta: Hillcrest Heritage Society, 1976), p. 122.

[39] See for example: Audrey Hrynchuk and Jean Klufas, eds., Memories: Redwater and District (Redwater, Alberta: [n.p.], 1972), p. 186.

[40] See for example: Chestermere Historical Society, eds., Saddles, Sleighs and Sadirons ([n.p.]: Chestermere Historical Society, 1971), p. 171.

[41] See for example: C. J. Christianson, My Life on the Range (Lethbridge: Southern Printing Company, 1968), p. 57; Winnie Moore and Fran Moore, p. 120.

[42] See for example: Lillian Bretzlaff and Mildred Hay, p. 426; Book Committee, Eckville and District Historical Society, p. 652.

[43] A. W. Cashman, The Vice-Regal Cowboy: Life and Times of Alberta's J.J. Bowlen (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1957), p. 109.

[44] MacGregor, North West of 16, p. 74.

[45] Hec MacLean, p. 21.

[46] Ruth Thibodeau, p. 18.

[47] See for example: Fort Macleod History Book Committee, eds., Fort Macleod-Our Colourful Past: A History of the Town of Fort Macleod, from 1874 to 1924 (Fort Macleod, Alberta: Fort Macleod History Book Committee, 1977), p. 375; Winnie Moore and Fran Moore, p. 120; Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 553.

[48] Helen D. Howe, ed., Seventy-Five Years Along the Red Deer River ([n.p.]: [n.p.]. 1971), pp. 48-49.

[49] Ralphene Bolinger, Auley Kilcup, Opal McMillan, and Ella Hayes, eds., The Gleichen Call: A History of Gleichen and Surrounding Areas, 1877-1968 (Gleichen, Alberta: Gleichen United Church Women, 1968), p. 179.

[50] Raber, p. 61.

[51] Ghost Pine Community Group, eds., *Memoirs of the Ghost Pine Homesteaders* ([Three Hills, Alberta]: [Ghost Pine Community Group], 1954), p. 48.

[52] Breton and District Historical Society, eds., *The Ladder of Time: A History of Breton and District* (Breton, Alberta: [Breton and District Historical Society], 1980), p. 17.

[53] Carseland and Cheadle Historical Book (1971) Committee, eds., *Trails to the Bow: Carseland and Cheadle Chronicles* ([Carseland, Alberta]: Carseland and Cheadle Historical Book (1971) Committee, 1971), p. 51.

[54] Karolides, p. 39.

[55] See for example: Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 157; Vera Holt, p. 423.

[56] See for example: Helen D. Howe, p. 144; Ned Dodd, p. 29.

[57] See for example: C. H. Stout, p. 143; Donna Chadwick, p. 71.

[58] See for example: Harriet C. Brown, ed., *Beaver Tales: History of Ryley & District* (Ryley, Alberta: Ladies Auxiliary, Royal Canadian Legion, 1978), p. 185.

[59] Hec MacLean, p. 82.

[60] Clara Middleton and J. E. Middleton, *Green Fields Afar: Memories of Alberta Days* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947), p. 15.

[61] Christianson, p. 90.

[62] Henry Stelfox, *Rambling Thoughts of a Wandering Fellow* ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1972), pp. 83-86.

[63] Warner Old Timers' Association, eds., *Warner Pioneers, 1900-1921* (Warner, Alberta: [Warner Old Timers' Association], 1962), p. 150.

[64] Sylvia Edstrom and Florence Lundstrom, eds., *Memoirs of the Edberg Pioneers* ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1955), p. 13.

[65] Puffer, pp. 12-13.

[66] Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: Wiley, 1966), p. 196.

[67] See for example: Edgerton and District Historical Society, p. 448; J. R. Stan Hambly, ed., The Battle River Country: An Historical Sketch of Duhamel and District (New Norway, Alberta: Duhamel Historical Society, 1974), p. 57; E. J. Cotton with Ethel Mitchell, Buffalo Bud: Adventures of A Cowboy (Vancouver: Hancock House Publishers, 1981), p. 30.

[68] Blackburn, p. 27.

[69] Peggy Holmes, It Could Have Been Worse: The Autobiography of a Pioneer (Toronto: Collins Publishers, 1980), p. 170.

[70] [Majestic-Farrell Lake Women's Institute Book Committee], eds., Harvest of Memories (Lethbridge: Southern Printing Company, 1968), p. 110.

[71] Malmo Women's Institute, eds., Lewisville Pioneers ([n.p.]: [Malmo Women's Institute], [1962]), p. 75; Chestermere Historical Society, p. 69.

[72] See for example: Holmes, p. 117; Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 295.

[73] See for example: Alice Voisey, ed., Wheat Country: A History of Vulcan & District (Vulcan, Alberta: Vulcan & District Historical Society, 1973), p. 302.

[74] MacGregor, North West of 16, p. 80.

[75] Book Committee, Eckville and District Historical Society, p. 231.

[76] Helen D. Howe, p. 134.

[77] Joan Yates and Audrey Lowe, p. 330.

[78] Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 295.

[79] See for example: Helen Finstad et al., p. 193; Winnie Moore and Fran Moore, p. 15.

[80] See for example: Ponoka and District Historical Society, eds., Ponoka Panorama (Ponoka, Alberta: Ponoka and District Historical Society, 1973), p. 457; Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 458.

[81] Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 299.

[82] Barons History Book Club, eds., Wheat Heart of the West: A History of Barons and District (Barons, Alberta: Barons History Committee, 1972), p. 67.

[83] Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, p. 441.

[84] See for example: Evelyn Demorest et al., p. 212.

[85] A rough estimate of those listed in Gloria M. Strathern, comp., Alberta, 1954-1979: A Provincial Bibliography (Edmonton: University of Alberta, Printing Services Department, 1982) suggests that 40% to 60% feature cowboys.

[86] J. G. MacGregor, A History of Alberta, rev. ed. (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1981), p. 129.

[87] Jacques Hamilton, Our Alberta Heritage, 5 vols. (Calgary: Calgary Power Ltd., 1971-1975), vol. 2: Places, p. 81.

[88] Jock Carpenter, Fifty Dollar Bride: Marie Rose Smith - A Chronicle of Metis Life in the 19th Century (Sydney, British Columbia: Gray's Publishing, 1977), p. 92.

[89] Cashman, p. 106.

[90] Jacques Hamilton, Our Alberta Heritage, 5 vols., (Calgary: Calgary Power Ltd., 1971-1975), vol. 1: People, p. 56.

[91] Ernest Herbert Falkland Warren, Seventy South Alberta Years (Ilfracombe, Devon: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1960), p. 72.

[92] Carpenter, p. 92.

[93] Norman Stewart, Children of the Pioneers (Penhold, Alberta: [Norman Stewart], [1962]), p. 43.

[94] W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg, gen. eds., Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, 10 vols. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada), vol. 8: Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process (1940) by C. A. Dawson and Eva R. Younge, pp. 60-82.

[95] St. Lina History Book Committee, p. 75; See also: Edgerton and District Historical Society, p. 363; Breton and District Historical Society, p. 430.

[96] Ghost Pine Community Group, p. 128.

[97] Breton and District Historical Society, p. 17.

[98] Edgerton and District Historical Society, p. 79.

[99] See for example: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, p. 520; Violet Florkewich et al., p. 288.

[100] See for example: Warren, p. 105.

[101] See for example: J. R. Stan Hambly, p. 79; Edgerton and District Historical Society, p. 504.

[102] See for example: C. H. Stout, p. 140; Ghost Pine Community Group, pp. 25-26.

[103] See for example: Alice Voisey, p. 328; Donna Chadwick, p. 284.

[104] See for example: Sarah Ellen Roberts, *Of Us and the Oxen* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1968), pp. 18-19; Donna Chadwick, p. 87.

[105] Alfred Parton, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Vantage Press, 1966), pp. 26-27.

[106] Violet Florkewich et al., p. 309; Edgerton and District Historical Society, p. 93.

[107] See for example: Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 411; North Lone Pine Women's Institute, eds., *Bucking Poles and Butter Churns: History of Lone Pine and District* (Didsbury, Alberta: North Lone Pine Women's Institute, 1972), p. 126; Holmes, p. 106.

[108] See for example: Eugenie Louise Myles, *The Emperor of Peace River* (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1965), p. 37; Lillian Bretzlaff and Mildred Hay, pp. 425-426; Del Bonita Historical Society, eds., *Heritage of the High Country: A History of Del Bonita and Surrounding Districts* (Del Bonita, Alberta: Del Bonita Historical Society, 1981), p. 259.

[109] MacGregor, *North West of 16*, p. 99.

[110] Linda Rasmussen, Lorna Rasmussen, Candace Savage, and Anne Wheeler, research and comps., *A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1976), p. 13; Elaine Leslau Silverman, *The Last Best West: Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1984), p. 73.

[111] Barons History Book Club, p. 176.

[112] Stewart, p. 5.

[113] Book Committee, Eckville and District Historical Society, p. 137.

[114] See for example: Malmo Women's Institute, p. 90; Vivian Robinson et al., p. 84.

[115] See for example: Breton and District Historical Society, p. 38; Dinton Women's Institute and Gladys Women's Institute, eds., Gladys and Dinton through the Years ([n.p.]: Dinton Women's Institute and Gladys Women's Institute, 1965), p. 157.

[116] Ghost Pine Community Group, p. 43.

[117] See for example: Cereal Women's Institute, eds., Down Cereal's Memory Trails, vol. 1 of 2 (Cereal, Alberta: Cereal Women's Institute, [1967]), p. 72.

[118] Vivian Robinson et al., p. 377.

[119] Dinton Women's Institute and Gladys Women's Institute, p. 163; See also: Helen Finstad et al., p. 199.

[120] See for example: Hec MacLean, p. 111.

[121] See for example: Carseland and Cheadle Historical Book (1971) Committee, p. 251; Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 200; Breton and District Historical Society, p. 430.

[122] See for example: Myles, p. 220; Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, p. 477.

[123] See for example: Alice Campbell, p. 278; Lillian Bretzlaff and Mildred Hay, p. 171.

[124] See for example: St. Lina History Book Committee, p. 201; Carpenter, p. 128.

[125] Ralphene Bolinger et al., p. 48.

[126] See for example: Joan Yates and Audrey Lowe, p. 166; Raber, p. 142; Georgina H. Thomson, Crocus and Meadowlark Country: A Story of an Alberta Family (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1963), p. 90.

[127] Anne Spreight, pp. 533-534.

[128] Helen Finstad et al., p. 220.

[129] The Book Committees of Sundial, Enchant, and Retlaw, eds., Drybelt Pioneers of Sundial, Enchant, Retlaw (Lethbridge: Southern Printing Company, 1967), p. 132.

[130] E. M. Hansen, ed., Brick's Hill, Berwyn and Beyond: A History of Berwyn and District (Berwyn, Alberta: Berwyn Centennial Committee, 1968), p. 209; See also: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Book Club, p. 400.

[131] See for example: Vera Holt, p. 614; Frank M. Webber, The Northwest Quarter of Thirty-Six ([Edmonton]: Frank M. Webber, [1964]), p. 96.

[132] See for example: Vauxhall and Districts Book Committee, eds., Where Waters Flow ([n.p.]: [n.p.], [1969]), p. 164; Gwendolyn Ross, p. 255; Donna Chadwick, p. 80.

[133] See for example: E. M. Hansen, p. 205; Donna Chadwick, p. 311.

[134] See for example: Myles, pp. 41-42.

[135] Roberts, p. 132.

[136] See for example: Ghost Pine Community Group, p. 183; Harriet Brown, p. 145.

[137] Hec MacLean, p. 126.

[138] J. R. Stan Hambly, p. 37.

[139] Sylvia Edstrom and Florence Lundstrom, p. 36.

[140] See for example: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, p. 477.

[141] See for example: Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 305.

[142] See for example: Lillian Bretzlaff and Mildred Hay, p. 445.

[143] See for example: Stewart, pp. 49-50.

[144] See for example: Thomson, pp. 70 & 73; Raber, pp. 55 & 90.

[145] See for example: Ponoka and District Historical Society, p. 610; Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 324; Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 523.

[146] See for example: Stewart, p. 14; Warren, p. 34.

[147] Of those accounts the authors of which were identified, approximately 60% were children during at least some part of the time that the family were establishing themselves on the frontier.

THE FRONTIER COMMUNITY

The local community emerges from the writings of Alberta's popular historians as the only social unit of any real importance in a frontier context larger than the family. "Community" need not be a specific place in the sense of, for example, a town; rather, it tends to refer to areas possessed of relatively vague and sometimes fluid boundaries. In many books, the community under discussion does not appear on maps of the province. The business core of the region may have been superseded by larger centres or the community may never have possessed the collection of public and commercial institutions which enable map-makers to give it an exact location. Even in those cases where the place being chronicled in a local history has grown into a major regional centre, the focus of the book is on the development of a community ethos in the rural districts and not on the physical growth of the town. Community is, therefore, being defined by local historians according to its functions and not according to its geographic location.

The primary function identified for the frontier community is as a forum for cooperation. Neighbourliness and progress through group effort are key elements of the myth of pioneer society. Although popular historians and family biographers in Alberta often take a Turnerian approach to the individual pioneer and the importance of his talents and character, they do not adopt the American historian's theories regarding communities. Frederick Jackson Turner's concept of frontier society is simply an extension of the image he projects of the individual in the wilderness:

> Complex society is precipitated by the wilderness into a kind of primitive organization based on the family. This tendency is anti-social. It produces antipathy to control and particularly to direct control.[1]

Local historians, by contrast, offer an image of the frontier in which this primitive individualism is replaced by voluntary cooperation between competent and autonomous men to achieve common goals. The difference between praising personal independence and determination and extolling the virtues of joint effort is an example of the varying focus from the American to the Canadian frontier traditions. It is notable that, just as strength of character and the will to succeed are held to have enabled the pioneer and his family to build anew, so too are those same attributes said to have contributed to the growth of the community. The image that arises from the literature is not one of cooperation for mere survival; the endeavours of the collectivity are depicted as having been directed at building a pleasant and prosperous lifestyle.

Joint activities - mutual aid in accomplishing large tasks and gathering together for entertainment - figure prominently in discussions of community spirit on the frontier. As might be expected given the origins of the works, accounts in community history books are the principal sources for such discussions. The pervasiveness of the concept of cooperative community is indicated by the fact that it receives additional expression in the other types of material, particularly in memoirs and biographies.

One of the primary historical roles assigned to frontier communities is that they provided for their own growth. Descriptions of help given to new settlers are a common feature of family narratives. This may have taken the form of living accommodations: new arrivals were invited to share homes or were given the use of dwellings which were the first homes of established families.[2] We are told that new comers were also welcomed by loans of machinery,[3] advice on local conditions,[4] and festivities to introduce them to the neighbourhood.[5] The same purpose is often held to have been achieved by a simple gesture:

> One spring morning, on looking out of a window, they saw a young boy plowing a small plot near the house. Mr. Bill Askew had sent his son to plow a garden plot for them as a surprise; a real Canadian welcome from a wonderful neighbor.[6]

Few reasons are actually given for the services extended to new settlers. There are occasional references to the delight with which isolated pioneers welcomed the addition of neighbours,[7] but most ascribe the warm reception of newcomers to simple western or Canadian hospitality. The contribution of such activities to achieving the praiseworthy goal of community-building is, however, too coincidental to be overlooked.

Similarly, the community is portrayed as having sustained itself when tragedy or hard times threatened its members. When people joined together to build a coffin for the deceased child of a neighbour[8] or to help a widowed woman maintain the farm built by her husband,[9] we are told that these activities were a part of the cooperative spirit of the frontier. The infamous and disastrous winter of 1906/07 is typically held to have called out a sense of solidarity among neighbours.[10] We are also told that the practical assistance of the community could render a calamity less disruptive, as, for example, did the help given by neighbours in reconstructing a home after a fire.[11] Less tangible comfort is said to have been provided by the knowledge that hardships were shared and endured as a group.[12] The community is also presented as having acted jointly to prevent settlers from leaving[13] and, one presumes, thereby diminishing what had been built.

Many of the neighbourly activities recounted in popular histories were aimed at enhancing the progress of the settlers and not simply as preventing the dissolution of the district. Resources were shared and major tasks undertaken together. Numerous accounts exist of shortfalls in equipment being made up by borrowing from neighbours, "tools, wagons, implements, everything except their wives."[14] While most of the borrowing and lending discussed involved farm equipment and building tools, it could also encompass luxuries such as sharing the benefits of a car.[15] In a related vein, a variety of supply cooperatives are portrayed as having enabled settlers to maximize their limited resources. In some cases this was an informal arrangement where neighbours in isolated areas took turns making supply trips, a procedure which saved money and, more importantly, time that could be spent in productive activity.[16] A smaller number of narratives tell of more organized cooperative which purchased bulk goods for common use.[17] Beef rings, the pioneer solution to the lack of refrigeration facilities, were yet another type of supply cooperative. A group of households would get together and take turns supplying and butchering cattle and dividing the proceeds among all the members of the ring. In this way, butchering was done frequently enough that fresh meat was always available and none was wasted. Possibly because they are so much outside the experience of today's Alberta, beef rings receive quite a lot of detailed attention in popular history.[18]

Work bees are, without a doubt, the dominant element of the tradition surrounding neighbourliness. These work parties are depicted as having been part labour and part entertainment:

> Spring was also the season of wood sawing bees. During the winter months the men cut and piled logs of green trees, ready to saw the next spring. The wood was cut into stove lengths with a circular saw, run by a device called a 'Helping Henry', fastened to the jacked up rear wheel of the family model T. It was dangerous

> work and more than one man lost a finger or even a hand, by getting too close to the whirring blade. The sawing outfit usually made the rounds, going from farm to farm, until everyone had their next winter's fuel supply. The wives often went along to prepare the meals or just to visit.[19]

Work bees also built houses and barns,[20] rounded up cattle,[21] cleared land,[22] and brought in logs for building.[23] The most common context for them, however, is threshing. In sparsely settled areas and in the early years when commercial threshing crews were not available, we are told that equipment was purchased and the work was done by groups within the community.[24] Threshing was a particularly significant activity: it finished the harvest and its product was the ultimate symbol of success. The money received for grain is rarely mentioned by the number of bushels threshed and the quality of the result are often noted in some detail. That threshing is so often portrayed as a joint undertaking is, then, a significant statement about the role of the community in enhancing the success of the individual.

Life on the frontier, we are told, was not all taken up with practicalities: there was time devoted to entertainment and most of this involved a collection of neighbours. A constant theme in the literature is that a good time was obtainable in spite of prevailing poverty:

> This house was the site of a good many parties and Christmas celebrations those first few years. To these, all of the women contributed to the party fare. No one was 'flush' enough to 'throw' a party all on his own in those days.[25]

The fact that the entertainment was "homespun"[26] and the guests had "patches on their clothes"[27] evidently did not prevent all from enjoying "happy fun times."[28] Phrases like these above make an obvious comparison with the elaborate, expensive, and often electronic entertainments of today. This comparison is, in some narratives, even more explicit:

> The young bucks had their 'sports cars' then too: a fancy buggy with a team of high steppers decked out in polished harness with brass buckles. Rivalry was keen over who had the best or fastest team, with many a challenge race.[29]

Most of the contrasts between the social activities of the pioneers and those of the present reflect negatively on the latter. The essential difference perceived between the two eras is that the early period put a much greater emphasis on human relationships. This feature is reflected in the importance given to visiting, an activity which is held to have been much more common on the frontier than it is in our own day.[30] In community histories, narrators frequently devote whole paragraphs to describing the reputation which their families had for being hospitable.[31] Even when being sociable was carried to ridiculous lengths, it is presented in a favourable light:

> Mrs. Malcolm was a very friendly person. She would often hitch up her horse and go visiting and if she was making bread at the time, she just took it along and the bread baked while she and her neighbor visited.[32]

Spontaneity, simplicity, and human contact are extolled as having been the essence of most frontier amusements.

There were, however, a number of occasions which were more formal in their organization and purpose. Dominion Day and other major holidays in the summer are remembered fondly as excuses for community picnics and sports days. Descriptions of these events contain some of the most powerful imagery in the myth of neighbourliness. Notably, this is frequently expressed in the sharing of food, that ever-important commodity:

> The pioneers sat down and fell to on a conglomeration of sandwiches, salads, pickles, ham, devilled eggs, cakes, tarts and pies of several varieties. Chicken pie got mixed up with cherry preserves on our plates and we ate it with a spoon and speared olives with a hat-pin, for ladies wore long hat-pins in those days. Everyone laughed and talked and ate and got acquainted with other homesteaders.[33]

Just as providing ample food has become an important symbol of the central role of women in a family context, so too does the sharing of good food symbolize the benefits of building a community.[34] A wide variety of dances,[35] baseball games,[36] weddings with subsequent chivarees,[37] rabbit hunts,[38] concerts,[39] and potluck suppers[40] round out the social calendar depicted for the pioneers.

The positive portrayal of neighbourliness in local histories is undoubtedly influenced by the writers' knowledge that their opinions will be read by the other residents of their districts. A book designed to celebrate the progress of a community is unlikely to offer serious criticism of its founders and their conduct as a collectivity. The tone of most narratives and the detail in which community affairs are discussed, however, suggests that the images of cooperation are intended to do more than just placate public opinion. There is a profound belief in the value of solidarity and nostalgic regret for the passing of a society thought to have been based on personal contact. There may well be, in this, an element of the "rose coloured glasses" phenomenon as an elderly generation looks back to its younger days. For whatever reason, the relationship between pioneer neighbours and the sense of community that they possessed are seen as a crucial part of the formula that enabled early settlers to endure and even to thrive on poverty and hardship.

In many regions, ethnic diversity was a barrier to the development of a sense of community. Professional historians writing about the settlement of western Canada demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxon, Protestaut majority viewed the arrival of immigrants who were linguistically, culturally, and relitiously distinct as an undesirable invasion.[41] Rapid assimilation of these people was the goal of both the government and the settlers who belonged to the dominant group. The mechanisms for doing so, however, were not in place and most immigrants did not want to exchange their own traditions for Anglo-Canadian practices. The result was a considerable amount of tension throughout the pioneer era with outbursts of hostility during periods of crisis such as World War One.[42]

The treatment of ethnicity by popular and amateur historians offers insight into the myth-making process. The realities of bigotry on the part of the majority and the refusal of immigrant groups to make concessions in the face of cultural threats are largely ignored by most of these writers. Stereotypes of negroes,[43] Slavs,[44] the Irish,[45] and numerous others persist down to the present but the conditions which produced them have been forgotten. In fact, most stereotypes appear in the context of a positive comment which seems to suggest that the subject was a 'credit to his race.' James MacGregor's characterizations of several different groups typifies this trend:

> [The Mormons] were busily building their towns of Cardston and Magrath and converting their area into the paradise it has since become. When these industrious, purposeful and experienced people, backed by their church, came to Canada with determination and capital, they performed wonders in subduing the prairie...[French Catholics] Year by year, living in the primitive simplicity of all pioneers, these laughter-loving, sociable people progressed up the scale of material living... Such then were the conditions the sturdy Scandinavians faced up to and enjoyed in their strenuous struggle which brought the area in which they settled to its present productive richness... [T]he arrival of these unique Ukranians with their quaint customs and exotic costumes was linked directly to that of the first Germans who had preferred the mud of the Edmonton area to the dust of Medicine Hat...nothing could stop this influx of [Ukranians] devoted to the soil and exulting in obtaining it free of monetary cost.[46]

References to specific ethnic groups appear most commonly in memoirs, general histories, and older local histories. One would expect to find the recent concern with multi-culturalism reflected in books produced by rural communities in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This is not, however, the case. It might be that the writers perceive memorializing the often unpleasant reality of cross-cultural relations on the frontier as running counter to the tenor of our times and think that any suggestion of ethnic conflict would be a blot on the reputation of the community. Even in areas where the names of the families who submitted accounts to the community book indicate that the early settlers were almost all from the same background, cultural traits and ethnic identity receive no more than a brief mention.[47] In the remainder, the reader occasionally finds a comment in the introductory pages alluding to the ethnic mix of the area but accounts detailing any sort of discord between the groups are rare.

There are two exceptions to the apparent consensus to avoid comment on specific cultural groups. Indians and Englishmen merit a special place in both community histories and memoirs. The former are depicted as improvident, colourful characters[48] who early settlers feared needlessly.[49] Indians tend to be seen as a part of nature and are at times described in the same paragraph as the buffalo herds they hunted:

> Great herds of buffalo numbering in the thousands grazed quietly on the prairie - or thundered over it 'till the earth trembled with their impact. Indians of the Blackfeet nation roamed at will and followed the seasonal migrations of the buffalo. The winds swished the tall prairie grass, coyotes howled, and birds sang in summer. In winter the warm Chinook melted the snows and brought relief from the cold to the men and women of the teepees and to the buffalo huddled in the coulees.[50]

Accounts of Indians are seldom overtly negative; rather they are patronizing. We are told that pioneer women frequently took pity on the natives' inability to adapt to the new environment and gave them food which they consumed ravenously.[51] Indians are also portrayed as having had quaint notions about a wide variety of matters - animal husbandry, dancing, and honesty.[52] None of the local history volumes used in this study accorded natives an equal position in the community. In some books a section immediately following the one describing the physical environment of the area is devoted to discussing the local tribal group.[53] Even in the rare volumes where Indians appear as individuals, they are dealt with in a part of the book separate from the narratives of pioneer families. This peculiarity provides the key to understanding the only plausible explanation for the seemingly anomalous treatment of Indians as a distinct and inferior ethnic group: they are seen as having been outside the community. Thus, comments about them do not conflict with the desire to present a picture of ethnic harmony on the frontier.

Englishmen clearly do not fit into the same category as Indians, as the former were an integral part of the frontier community. Yet they appear as the butt of many pioneer jokes:

> A number of green Englishmen settled near by and were just in misery with huge mosquito bites. However, Dan Rochon told them they were not bad, they used to have to run a pole through them and poke holes here and there, to be able to see as they shut off the sun. The neighbours had a lot of fun with the green Englishmen, especially when

> they tried to drive oxen....[54]

Englishmen are almost invariably portrayed as having been "green" and fair game for any sort of prank or sharp business deal.[55] Even accounts which praise the English for persistence, hard work, and contributions to the community frequently mention their inexperience or greenness.[56] There is no reason to suppose that Englishmen were any more gullible or less skilled than men of any other ethnic group who came to the Alberta frontier from a different environment. Nonetheless, the phrase, "green as those dead Englishmen who had to be kiln-dried before they would burn in Hades,"[57] has made its way into our popular culture. There is one notable difference between Englishmen and those from other cultures: to be British was to be a member of the dominant ethnic group in Canada. Therefore, it is a less serious offence against current social mores to attack an Englishman, especially lightheartedly, than any member of a minority group. It may be that the trend of such attacks is, to some degree, a reaction against the anglophilic predisposition of the reality of frontier society. Add to this the fact that many British settlers came from an urban setting and that there were English remittance men in Alberta who never really tried to be a part of pioneer society,[58] and the explanation for the distinctive treatment of Englishmen is apparent.

The presentation of ethnic relations in local histories and memoirs is one which sacrifices historical accuracy, perhaps subconsciously, to a goal more valued by the writers. The depiction of a unified community that did not allow its collective strength to be diminished by internal bickering is a reflection of both the pride of communities that began in the pioneer period and the desire of Albertans today to create a reality in which there is ethnic harmony. This goal is carried a step further by those who write for Alberta Education's Heritage Learning Resources Project. In the series of books prepared for the elementary school social studies program, the issue of ethnic conflict is not simply ignored - it is actively denied. School children reading Albertans All learn how Canada welcomed the unwanted and unhappy hordes of Europe and gave them good land in western Canada.[59] Clifford Sifton's famous statement in which he put out a call for:

> ...a stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers had been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and half a dozen children,[60]

and in which he revealed the prevailing attitude of Anglo-Canadians to eastern Europeans, has been paraphrased to read:

> Sifton wanted immigrants to come and fill up the prairies. The language they spoke didn't matter, nor did their religion. Sifton wanted good farmers who would work hard on the land.[61]

The author has laundered the passage of its ethnic slurs and made it more acceptable to current thoughts about what the ethos of the frontier period should have been.

Another volume in the series, Pages from the Past, uses case studies to illustrate the cultural diversity of western Canada. One section which relates the stories of Kootenai Brown, English soldier turned Canadian backwoodsman, and Marie Rose Smith, Métis ranch wife, is entitled "Colourful Times Make Colourful People."[62] The truth of this statement is indisputable; however, the fact that colourful people did not always accept the attitudes and attributes of other colourful people does not make its way into the pages of the book. Englishmen figure most prominently as absentee ranch owners[63] and Indians are held to have adapted successfully from a hunter-gatherer society to embrace a wide variety of middle class professions.[64]

History is modified most blatantly in an account of a fictional frontier settlement, entitled Chinook Ridge, 1880-1914, published in 1979. Edna Bakken, the author of this volume, portrays a community which contains settlers from England, the Ukraine, French Canada, and Ontario, as well as Russo-Germans, Scandinavians, and Mormons from Utah. The children who attend the school in the settlement are the focal characters in the book. They have no apparent language difficulties, never stoop to racist name-calling, and happily learn about one another's origins. Their parents get along equally well, cooperating in field work and organizing community picnics and berry-picking expeditions.

By the methods employed in these books, the provincial Department of Education is obviously hoping to instill what is considered to be a healthy social attitude in the school children who read them. The goal may be praiseworthy but the falsification of history to achieve it is not. The probable success of this tactic is also open to question. In a recent Journal of Canadian Studies article, David Jay Bercuson suggests that, in western Canadian schools of the early twentieth century, the failure of the curriculum to relate to the reality of the students' lives led to its failure to achieve the desired goal of assimilating them into the culture of the British Empire.[65] One suspects that a parallel fate may await the current attempt to use textbooks that portray an idealized society as tools of indoctrination.

The treatment of ethnic relations in frontier districts by popular historians and Department of Education writers creates an impression of unity. The emphasis on early cooperation in work and recreation suggests that the pioneers possessed a positive sense of community; the denial of the less pleasant implications of multi-culturalism in its formative stages indicates that they are thought to have recognized the value of solidarity. Many writers, however, go even further and discuss the institutional aspects of their communities. Not surprisingly, this approach is particularly typical of the contributors to local history books. Amateur historians perceive that only a very small number of actual buildings comprised the essential core of the frontier community. The school, one or more churches, a store, usually combined with the post office, and a stopping place, are the institutions most commonly mentioned in family narratives. The introductory sections of local histories produced by areas rarely discussed in a complaining tone; rather, most writers take pride in having endured conditions that were comfortless when compared to modern classrooms and school buses. The building of a school is usually presented as an obvious course of action for a community. Fathers who served on early school boards are often praised[68] and, as mentioned earlier, bachelors who opposed paying the necessary taxes are criticized.[69] But the emphasis placed by the pioneers on education itself is scarcely recognized.[70] It seems that schooling is so integral a part of our own society that the authors do not even question its origins.

The schoolhouse appears in another guise in the folklore of the Alberta frontier; it was the earliest community centre:

> Vincent school, like all schools in new settlements, was used as a community centre. Lots of dances were held the year round. Even the smallest child never missed a dance. Many times we walked back to the school on a summer evening to play ball. Everyone in the district attended the school closing picnics at the end of June. The school was also used for church services, we attended them all no matter what denomination.[71]

More than any other community activity, dances in the schoolhouse are described in detail and, to a striking degree, follow a common formula. Local musicians, a potluck supper, attendance by the vast majority of district residents, and children put to bed on coats on the floor or the desks, are frequently elements of these accounts.[72] While the popularity of such stories is partially explained by the widespread existence of the practice, the degree of uniformity and the amount of detail often given suggest that schoolhouse dances have a particular symbolic role in the frontier myth. It seems significant that the one building which was built and maintained by all residents, through taxes, donated labour, or both, is also featured prominently as having been enjoyed by everyone.

Churches occupy a decidely secondary position in the portrayal of public institutions in Alberta's popular historical writings. The importance and roles assigned to them vary considerably depending on the type of book in question and the individual concerns of the authors. When reading local histories, it is almost invariably possible to discover when churches were built and some books devote entire chapters to this matter.[73] Involvement in church affairs is frequently mentioned in family accounts but normally it is in the context of other community activities. Such references, therefore, are used to show the public-spiritedness and not the devoutness of the individual in question.[74] Areas settled by a homogenous population tend to produce a few stories which highlight the spiritual aspects of church attendance[75] and the importance of religious fellowship in promoting adjustment to the frontier.[76] Memoirs, biographies, and general works contain relatively few references to religious matters. This distinction is unexpected as some of the general histories deal with missionary settlers[77] and memoirs are normally a forum for the intensely personal matters which are left out of community histories. There have been slight changes in the treatment of religious affairs in all types of popular history over the last thirty-five years. The most obvious one is that they receive less overall attention but it also seems that references to actual religious fellowship are proportionately rarer in later works. The variation between individual accounts written at the same time and even appearing in the same book, however, makes it difficult to reach definite conclusions on this issue.

The primary role assigned to frontier churches is, in most cases a social one:

> For a while the church was the centre of our social activity. The Sunday services were a means of conveying messages, a chance to visit neighbours, send letters to town to be mailed, to compare crops and get spiritual as well as agricultural advice.[78]

This emphasis on churches as having provided a means to lessen isolation is a persistent but contradictory part of the frontier myth. If the writers portrayed a society in which travel was so difficult that it was undertaken only for extremely important matters of which religious devotion was one, contact with neighbours could be seen as an important corollary of church attendance. This, however, is not the case. The secular community life in frontier districts is depicted as having been very active and the portrayal of religiosity is so scant that it is clearly not seen as a powerful motivation in the lives of the pioneers. This paradox may result from changes in the role of the church in society: the past importance of the institution continues to be recognized but the underlying foundation of religious sentiment is an uncomfortable issue for a society which has become overwhelmingly secular in its pursuits. W. E. Mann demonstrates that there was such a foundation in his study of Protestant non-conformity, Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta. He suggests that the intensity of the religious experiences offered by small sects made them popular in outlying areas[79] and that they emphasized lay participation and dramatic, personal fundamentalism.[80] Such evangelicalism and the existence of nearly three dozen sects in frontier Alberta[81] are virtually ignored in popular historical writing, where instead, religion is employed as a mechanism for affirming the unity of pioneer communities. While it certainly served this purpose, denominational conflict is never mentioned and references to interdenominational services are common.[82]

Stores, post offices, and stopping places, the other public facilities found in nascent rural communities, are depicted as casual, friendly, and convenient. Most narrators emphasize the services provided to the neighbourhood by their proprietors and few even mention the profits earned. Ma Brainard, remembered in Harold Fryer's Alberta: The Pioneer Years for having fed lavishly a constant stream of travellers through the Beaverlodge area, is a good example of this. From Fryer's description of her establishment, it is clear that she ran a sort of road-side restaurant on a busy trail[83] but her success as a businessman is never discussed. In his memoirs, Maurice Destrube does mention sums of money in connection with the store he and his brothers ran on their homestead but he does not refer directly to profits. In one instance, he employs the euphemism "handling charge" for the difference between his costs and his prices.[84] He also stresses the non-commercial origins of his business: it apparently grew out of his willingness to lend supplies to his neighbours.[85] Spontaneity of origins is an even more common theme when informal wayside hotels or stopping places are discussed. These institutions are generally depicted as having been a natural development of the tradition of pioneer hospitality. Numerous accounts exist of homes, located conveniently between two places, gradually becoming the recognized place for travellers to break their journeys.[86] The essential homey-ness and comfort of stopping places, stores, and even post offices is frequently noted:

> The Newtons stocked a few groceries, and ran a small store in conjunction with the post office. Some humorous incidents took place in that room which served as store, post office and kitchen for the family. One autumn day the door had been left open, and when Mother Newton returned, there stood the sow peacefully munching peanuts from a fifty pound bag by the counter. One rather chilly day when Bill was carrying out the wash water he stubbed his toe and drenched Tom Helgeson who was sitting by the stove reading his mail.[87]

By emphasizing service over profit, natural growth instead of business decision, and casual comfort, popular historians rob these local facilities of their institutional character. A business core was an essential part of frontier community life and the writers recognize this fact. However, they choose to remember those aspects of local business which reaffirm the values they idealize - hospitality, helpfulness, and friendliness.

Local history books can be seen as an attempt to package the positive sense that the writers have about the early years of their community for the edification of today's readers. The choice of an appropriate and alluring title for these volumes is an important part of that process and one which seems to command a great deal of attention from editorial committees and even from the larger communities. Many regions hold contests to name their book and honour the winner with an acknowledgement in the introductory pages[88] and most volumes contain at least a paragraph explaining the aptness and significance of the title.[89] The labelling of the history of the community is clearly a matter of some moment to those involved and is, therefore, of interest here. Gloria Strathern's Alberta, 1954-1979: A Provincial Bibliography lists the titles of local histories published during those years. When viewed together, they fall into an intriguing pattern: more than eighty percent of them fit into five categories relating to geographic features, transportation, progress, nostalgia, and simple statements of purpose. These categories, moreover, show some correlation with dates of publication.

Most books written before the national centennial have simple titles which clearly indicate what the contents will include. The Nose Creek Story from 1792 (1962) and The History of Freedom and Naples Communities (1963) are two examples of this trend. After 1967, there was a rapid shift to titles which have a nostalgic theme and these remained popular throughout the 1970s. The words "golden", "heritage", "echoes", and "memories" are frequently employed in such titles creating the impression that the writers are looking back to an alluring past. Beiseker's Golden Heritage (1977), Harvest of Memories (1968), Echoes Along the Ribstone (1978), and Saga of Schuler Stalwarts (1973) all suggest to the reader, before the covers of the books are opened that the contents will present a romanticized view of the regions' histories.

The remaining three title themes - progress, geography, and transportation - involve a smaller but significant percentage of the total.[90] Several volumes written in the early 1970s incorporate the idea of positive change from the pioneer era to the present. Wagon Trails to Hardtop (1971) and Pioneers and Progress (1974) seem to indicate sentiments opposite to those discussed above; but, in fact, the contents do not differ to any discernible degree. It is perhaps significant that, in the early years of the last decade, Albertans perceived themselves to be making economic progress which was reflected at the local level in improvements to public facilities and services.

References to geographic features, predominantly local rivers, ranges of hills, and climatic conditions, characterize nearly twenty percent of the titles examined. The majority of these appear on the covers of works published in the latter half of the 1970s. Such titles as Chaps and Chinooks (1976), Our Bend in the Peace (1979), The Butte Stands Guard (1976), and Sons of Wind and Soil (1976) may simply be poetic references to the identifying features of the regions but they may also indicate a view which is decidly Turnerian in its reliance on geography as a determinant of frontiers and, therefore, of history.[91] A similar image is evoked by many of the titles which incorporate references to transportation, usually to early modes of travel as undertaken by pioneer settlers. Leavings By Trail (1977), A Trail Grows Dim (1967), and The Wheels of Time (1978) suggest much the same concept of progress and the moving frontier as does Turner's Cumberland Gap, from which one may "watch the procession of civilization."[92] Turner saw the advancing frontier with its demanding physical environment as the arbiter of his country's political and social life. The views of Alberta's local historians are less broad in scope but their choice of titles which tie the frontier to the physical aspects of the land and the demands of distance suggests a similar perception of the lasting effects of the frontier. Strength and bonds of unity called out by isolation and the conditions imposed by the terrain are thought by Alberta's community historians to have characterized the collective activities of the pioneers and to have provided the foundation for continuing community solidarity.

The treatment of Alberta pioneer communities in all types of popular history - regional volumes written by area residents, memoirs, biographies, and general works - is almost universally positive. The benefits of collective action by a group of capable individuals and family units are demonstrated by a number of themes which run through the books. Neighbourliness is the foremost of these. Neighbours are held to have joined together to create, out of the wilderness, a place for themselves; for work, making the frontier a prosperous place; and for entertainment, making it a pleasant place. The independence of the community from outside agencies is seen as a positive result of the cooperative spirit of the frontier. At times, as when the Blackfalds pioneers unanimously agreed to "kick the government in the place where it would do most good" and started a successful creamery cooperative in competition with a provincially sponsored operation in nearby Lacombe,[93] or when the ranching community is praised for basing agreements on trust, eliminating the need for the services of a lawyer,[94] this sense of independence is stated explicitly. More commonly, however, it is expressed by the emphasis placed on the self-contained nature of the unit and the lack of any reference to need for aid from outside the community.

When reading local histories and accounts of early community life in memoirs, biographies, and general histories, one has the impression that the writers are mourning the passing of something held dear. The frontier community, as depicted by popular historians, was an idyllic place in spite of the hardships. It was self-contained and independent but its resources were not imposed by any institution - they were supplied by the members of the community out of a genuine altruistic spirit of neighbourliness. This aspect of the frontier myth diverges significantly from the true situation and in it are revealed many of the anxieties the authors share about the current trends in human relationships and social organization.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1] Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), p. 30.

[2] See for example: Carseland and Cheadle Historical Book (1971) Committee, eds., Trails to the Bow: Carseland and Cheadle Chronicles ([Carseland, Alberta]: Carseland and Cheadle Historical Book (1971) Committee, 1971), p. 153; Morrin and District History Book Committee, eds., Blooming Prairie: A History of Morrin and District (Morrin, Alberta: Morrin and District History Book Committee, 1970), p. 326; Ned Dodd, ed., Remember When: The History of Trochu and District (Trochu, Alberta: Trochu History Book Committee, 1975), p. 402.

[3] See for example: K.I.K. History Committee, eds., K.I.K. Country (Keoma, Alberta: K.I.K. Historical Committee, 1974), p. 467.

[4] See for example: Violet Florkewich, John Hrasko, and Allan Olson, eds., Hills of Hope (Spruce Grove, Alberta: Carvel Unifarm, 1976), p. 265.

[5] See for example: Ibid., p. 385; J. R. Stan Hambly, ed., The Battle River Country: An Historical Sketch of Duhamel and District (New Norway, Alberta: Duhamel Historical Society, 1974), p. 125.

[6] Barons History Book Club, eds., Wheat Heart of the West: A History of Barons and District (Barons, Alberta: Barons History Committee, 1972), p. 176; See also: Norman Stewart, Children of the Pioneers ([Penhold, Alberta]: [Norman Stewart], [1962]), p. 23.

[7] J. G. MacGregor, North West of 16 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1958), p. 54; Fort Macleod History Book Committee, eds., Fort Macleod - Our Colourful Past: A History of the Town of Fort Macleod, from 1874 to 1924 (Fort Macleod, Alberta: Fort Macleod History Book Committee, 1977), p. 171.

[8] Edgerton and District Historical Society, eds., The Winds of Change ([Edgerton, Alberta]: [Edgerton and District Historical Society], [1975]), p. 351.

[9] Harriet C. Brown, ed., Beaver Tales: History of Ryley & District (Ryley, Alberta: Ladies Auxiliary, Royal Canadian Legion, 1978), p. 270.

[10] See for example: Lachlin McKinnon, Lachlin McKinnon, Pioneer, 1865-1948 ([n.p.]: The McKinnon Family, 1956), p. 74.

[11] Vera E. Holt, ed., The Lantern Era: A History of Cherhill, Rochfort Bridge, Sangudo and Surrounding School Districts (Sangudo, Alberta: Sangudo and District History Society, 1979), p. 268; See also: Roselynn Easter, ed., Rosemary: Land of Promise (Rosemary, Alberta: Rosemary Historical Society, 1977), p. 195.

[12] See for example: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, eds., Echoes of Fort Assiniboine and Districts (Fort Assiniboine, Alberta: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, 1982), p. 571; Winnie Moore and Fran Moore, eds., Across the Smoky (DeBolt, Alberta: DeBolt and District Pioneer Museum Society, 1978), p. 121.

[13] See for example: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, p. 287.

[14] Chestermere Historical Society, eds., Saddles, Sleighs and Sadirons ([n.p.]: Chestermere Historical Society, 1971), p. 16; See also: Stewart, p. 73.

[15] See for example: Ned Dodd, p. 81.

[16] See for example: Gwendolyn A. Ross, ed., A Patchwork of Memories (Thorsby, Alberta: The Historical Society of Thorsby and District, 1979), p. 760; Jessie J. Campbell, ed., Chatter Chips from Beaver Dam Creek: Castor and Her Neighbours, 1909-1974 (Castor, Alberta: Castor Old Timers' Association, 1974), p. 90; Cereal Women's Institute, eds., Down Cereal's Memory Trails, vol. 2 of 2 (Cereal, Alberta: Cereal Women's Institute, [1967]), p. 351.

[17] See for example: Evelyn Demorest, Ingrid Sturm, and Doris Fowlie, eds., Golden Memoirs, 1912-1963 ([Empress, Alberta]: [Pioneer Committee], [1963]), p. 73; William Spurrell Sr., Adventures in Two Worlds: I Worshipped the Old and Thrilled to the New (Carstairs, Alberta: The Carstairs News, 1974), p. 44.

[18] Alice Voisey, ed., Wheat Country: A History of Vulcan & District (Vulcan, Alberta: Vulcan & District Historical Society, 1973), p. 566; North Lone Pine Women's Institute, eds., Bucking Poles and Butter Churns: History of Lone Pine and District (Didsbury, Alberta: North Lone Pine Women's Institute, 1972), p. 199; Morrin and District History Book Committee, p. 320.

[19] Vivian Robinson, Mary Goodrich, Barbara Matthews, and Claude May, eds., Those Years From Rail to Oil: A His-

tory of Hardisty and Surrounding Area (Hardisty, Alberta: Hardisty History Book Committee, 1981), p. 153.

[20] See for example: Helen Finstad, Barbara Finstad, Delores Butterwick, and Mildred Nattrass, eds., Prairie Footprints: A History of the Community in Southern Alberta Known as Pendant d'Oreille ([n.p.]: Pendant d'Oreille Lutheran Church Women, 1970), p. 155; Donna Chadwick, ed., Candlelight Years (Innisfail, Alberta: Innisfail and District Historical Society, "Book Section", 1973), p. 36.

[21] See for example: E. J. Cotton with Ethel Mitchell, Buffalo Bud: Adventures of a Cowboy (Vancouver: Hancock House Publishers, 1981), pp. 41-42.

[22] See for example: Frank E. Mitchell, A History of Pioneering in the Pakan District ([n.p.]: [n.p.], [1973]), p. 39.

[23] See for example: Stewart, p. 18.

[24] See for example: Jean Chubb and Hilda Milligan, eds., Leaves of Yesteryear: A History of the Bon Accord District and the Biographies of the Men and Women who Pioneered the Area (Bon Accord, Alberta: Farm Women's Union of Alberta, 1969), p. 286; McKinnon, p. 61; Winnie Moore and Fran Moore, p. 12.

[25] E. M. Hansen, ed., Brick's Hill, Berwyn and Beyond: A History of Berwyn and District (Berwyn, Alberta: Berwyn Centennial Committee, 1968), p. 61.

[26] The Centennial Committee, eds., In Retrospect, 1967 ([Dewberry, Alberta]: [n.p.], [1967]), p. 124.

[27] Audrey Hrynchuk and Jean Klufas, eds., Memories: Redwater and District (Redwater, Alberta: [n.p.], 1972), p. 138.

[28] Helen D. Howe, ed., Seventy-Five Years Along the Red Deer River ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1971), p. 38.

[29] Chestermere Historical Society, p. 16.

[30] See for example: Jessie Browne Raber, Pioneering in Alberta (New York: Exposition Press, 1951), p. 49; Violet Florkewich et al., p. 377.

[31] See for example: Warner Old Timers' Association, eds., Warner Pioneers, 1900-1921 (Warner, Alberta: [Warner Old Timers' Association], 1962), p. 52; Breton and District Historical Society, eds., The Ladder of Time: A History of Breton and District (Breton, Alberta: [Breton and District

Historical Society], 1980), p. 418.

[32] [Majestic-Farrell Lake Women's Institute Book Committee], eds., Harvest of Memories (Lethbridge: Southern Printing Company, 1968), p. 153.

[33] Georgina H. Thomson, Crocus and Meadowlark Country: A Story of an Alberta Family (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1963), p. 159.

[34] See for example: Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, p. 298; [Majestic-Farrell Lake Women's Institute Book Committee], p. 26.

[35] See for example: McKinnon, p. 28; Barons History Book Club, p. 201.

[36] See for example: Hec MacLean, ed., Waterhole and the Land North of the Peace (Fairview, Alberta: Waterhole Old Timers' Association, 1970), p. 135.

[37] See for example: Ruth Thibodeau, ed., The Moyerton Story ([n.p.]: [n.p.], [1969]), p. 18.

[38] See for example: Book Committee, Eckville and District Historical Society, eds., Homesteads and Happiness (Eckville, Alberta: Eckville and District Historical Society, 1979), p. 350.

[39] See for example: Winnie Moore and Fran Moore, p. 12.

[40] See for example: Vivian Robinson et al., p. 378.

[41] John Herd Thompson, The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978), pp. 16-17; Harold Martin Troper, Only Farmers Need Apply: Official Canadian Government Encouragement of Immigration from the United States (Toronto: Griffin Press, 1972), Chapter 2; J. E. Rea, "The Roots of Prairie Society," in Prairie Perspectives, edited by David Gagan (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, 1970), passim; Howard Palmer, Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982), passim.

[42] Thompson, pp. 74-79; Palmer, p. 172.

[43] See for example: Grant MacEwan, John Ware's Cow Country (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1960), pp. 255-256.

[44] See for example: Mitchell, p. 36; Book Committee, Eckville and District Historical Society, p. 575.

[45] See for example: Roselynn Easter, p. 195; Henry Stelfox, Rambling Thoughts of a Wandering Fellow, 1903-1968 ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1972), pp. 31-32.

[46] J. G. MacGregor, A History of Alberta, rev. ed. (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1981), pp. 165-170.

[47] See for example: the Ukranian settlement of Chipman, Steve Hrynew, ed., Pride in Progress: Chipman-St. Michael-Star and Districts (Chipman, Alberta: Alberta Rose Historical Society, 1982); the Scandinavian settlement of Edberg, Sylvia Edstrom and Florence Lundstrom, eds., Memoirs of the Edberg Pioneers ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1955); and the Anglo-Saxon community of Edgerton; Edgerton and District Historical Society. One exception to this trend is the Mormon community of Raymond, J. Orvin Hickin, Kay B. Redd, and John L. Evans, eds., Roundup: Raymond, 1902-1967 (Raymond, Alberta: [Raymond Chamber of Commerce], 1967).

[48] See for example: McKinnon, p. 51; Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 379.

[49] See for example: Book Committee Eckville and District Historical Society, p. 585; Evelyn Buckley, ed., Chaps and Chinooks: A History West of Calgary, vol. 1 or 2 (Calgary: Foothills Historical Society, 1976), p. 204.

[50] Iris Keller, ed., Under the Chinook Arch: A History of Cayley and Surrounding Areas (Cayley, Alberta: Cayley Women's Institute, [1967]), p. 7.

[51] See for example: Spurrell, p. 30; Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 379.

[52] See for example: Jean Chubb and Hilda Milligan, p. 342; Eugenie Louise Myles, The Emperor of Peace River (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1965), p. 95; Stewart, p. 26.

[53] See for example: Vera Holt; K.I.K. History Committee; North Lone Pine Women's Institute.

[54] Edith Clark, ed., Trails of Tail Creek Country ([n.p.]: [n.p.], [1968]), p. 137.

[55] See for example: Ghost Pine Community Group, eds., Memoirs of the Ghost Pine Homesteaders ([Three Hills, Alberta]: [Ghost Pine Community Group], 1954), p. 41; Alfred Parton, The Story of My Life (New York: Vantage Press, 1966), p. 19; Gordon P. Puffer, A Giant Among Pioneers ([Edmonton]: [Gordon P. Puffer], 1976), pp. 52-53.

[56] See for example: Grant MacEwan, Between the Red and the Rockies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), p. 93; Clara Middleton and J. E. Middleton, Green Fields Afar: Memories of Alberta Days (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947), pp. 17-18.

[57] Edith Clark, p. 342.

[58] Robert Craig Brown and Ramsey Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974) pp. 58-59; Patrick Dunae, Gentlemen Emigrants: From the British Public Schools to the Canadian Frontier (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), Chapters 5 & 7.

[59] Edna Bakken, Albertans All (Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1980), pp. 48-49.

[60] Clifford Sifton as quoted in, James H. Gray, Boomtime: Peopling the Canadian Prairies (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979), p. 31.

[61] Bakken, Albertans All, p. 61.

[62] Ruth Bohnec, Pages from the Past (Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1979), p. 33.

[63] Bakken, Albertans All, p. 51.

[64] Ibid., p. 33.

[65] David Jay Bercuson, "Regionalism and 'Unlimited Identity' in Western Canada," Journal of Canadian Studies 15 (Summer 1980): 124.

[66] Warner Old Timers' Association, pp. 116-117; Helen D. Howe, p. 136; Steve Hrynew, p. 453.

[67] See for example: [Majestic-Farrell Lake Women's Institute Book Committee], p. 52; Violet Florkewich et al., p. 403; Gwendolyn Ross, p. 320.

[68] See for example: Ponoka and District Historical Society, eds., Ponoka Panorama (Ponoka, Alberta: Ponoka and District Historical Society, 1973), p. 642; Fort Macleod History Book Committee, p. 187; Donna Chadwick, p. 279.

[69] Thomson, p. 178; Anne Spreight, ed., Prairie Echoes: Precious Memories of the Former Hillcrest Municipality (Cadogan, Alberta: Hillcrest Heritage Society, 1976), p. 68.

[70] The exception being families who moved in order that their children might obtain a better education. Here again, the emphasis tends to be on the move rather than the learning

process. See for example: Chestermere Historical Society, p. 96; Helen Finstad et al., p. 189.

[71] Lillian Bretzlaff and Mildred Hay, eds., *Colinton and Districts: Yesterday & Today* (Colinton, Alberta: [History Book Club], [1980]), p. 284.

[72] See for example: [Majestic-Farrell Lake Women's Institute Book Committee], p. 185; Jessie J. Campbell, p. 150; Sarah Ellen Roberts, *Of Us and the Oxen* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1968), pp. 116-117.

[73] See for example: Steve Hrynew; Nanton and District Historical Society, eds., *Mosquito Creek Roundup* (Nanton, Alberta: Nanton and District Historical Society, 1975); Morrin and District History Book Committee.

[74] Dinton Women's Institute and Gladys Women's Institute, eds., *Gladys and Dinton Through the Years* ([n.p.]: Dinton Women's Institute and Gladys Women's Institute, 1965), p. 309; Donna Chadwick, p. 58.

[75] See for example: Joan G. Yates and Audrey J. Lowe, eds., *Along the Wapiti* (Grande Prairie, Alberta: Wapiti River Historical Society, 1981), p. 32; K.I.K. History Committee, p. 325.

[76] See for example: Warner Old Timers' Association, p. 128; Violet Florkewich et al., pp. 444-445.

[77] Grant MacEwan, *Fifty Mighty Men* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1958), pp. 229-234, on John Gough Brick; Grant MacEwan, *...and Mighty Women Too: Stories of Notable Western Canadian Women* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1975), pp. 207-213, on Julia Scott Lawrence.

[78] Vermilion Oldtimers' Association, eds., *Vermilion Memories* ([Vermilion, Alberta]: [Vermilion Oldtimers' Association], [1967]), p. 113; See also: Ned Dodd, p. 150; Middleton and Middleton, pp. 34-37.

[79] W. E. Mann, *Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955), Chapter 2.

[80] Ibid., Chapter 3.

[81] Ibid., Chapter 2.

[82] See for example: North Lone Pine Women's Institute, p. 196; McKinnon, pp. 82-83; Thomson, p. 134.

[83] Harold Fryer, Alberta: The Pioneer Years (Langley, British Columbia: Stagecoach Publishing, 1977), pp. 36-37.

[84] Maurice Destrube, Pioneering in Alberta: Maurice Destrube's Story, intro. Lewis G. Thomas, ed. James E. Hendrickson, Historical Society of Alberta, no. 4, gen. ed. R. C. Macleod (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1981), p. 90.

[85] Ibid., p. 56.

[86] See for example: North Lone Pine Women's Institute, p. 180; Hec MacLean, p. 89; Evelyn Buckley, p. 275.

[87] Del Bonita Historical Society, eds., Heritage of the High Country: A History of Del Bonita and Surrounding Districts (Del Bonita, Alberta: Del Bonita Historical Society, 1981), p. 448.

[88] See for example: Ned Dodd, p. 3; Fort Assiniboine Friendship Club Book Committee, p. iv; Donna Chadwick, p. 2.

[89] Vera Holt, pp. 3 & 7; Roselynn Easter, p. 3; Jessie J. Campbell, pp. iv & v.

[90] Approximately 40% in total.

[91] Turner, p. 9.

[92] Ibid., p. 12.

[93] Spurrell, p. 42.

[94] A. W. Cashman, The Vice-Regal Cowboy: Life and Times of Alberta's J. J. Bowlen (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1957), p. 100.

LAMENT FOR THE PROMISED LAND

Historical writing, be it the product of a learned academic, a popular historian writing for the public market, or an amateur sitting at his farm-kitchen table, is undertaken only if its author perceives it to be fulfilling some personal or social need. This statement is an obvious one but it highlights an important motivation behind the recent proliferation of works of popular history in Alberta. Pardon E. Tillinghast, in The Specious Past, emphasizes the increasing divergence between the historiographical concerns of academic professionals, absorbed with technique and philosophical foundations, and the demands of the general public for interesting, timely, and intelligible history which conforms to their "idea of reality."[1] He finds in this situation an explanation for the falling off of the reading public as a major audience for the works of professional historians but it also serves to explain why Albertans have decided to write their own history. The material being produced in academic circles fails to offer a picture of the past that is useful to the average Albertan in exploring his origins and meaningful in the context of his contemporary circumstances. There is no good comprehensive academic history of the province and one suspects that much of the specialized material available is simply considered to be boring. It tends to avoid personalities and Paul Voisey notes that professional historians "have conspicuously avoided writing local history."[2] The intensely personal and local focus of the bulk of recent popular and amateur histories in this province suggests that Albertans are, themselves, supplying the history that they want to read.

The fact that large numbers of people, untrained in the historical profession, have seen a need to write their own history does not, in itself, presuppose the existence of a myth. Rather, it is the uniformity of their imagery and the connections between the subjects they emphasize and contemporary matters of concern that identify their works as mythology. Raphael Patai notes that myth "always keeps man in the focus of its interest."[3] One might go further and suggest that it is focussed on the particular man or group of men for whom, and often by whom, it is being created. It enables the individual or the community to play out their anxieties at a remove; in the case of recent Alberta publications it is a remove in historical time. Myth permits them to re-affirm and transmit values which they believe to be threatened by changes in their social environment, it enables them as a group to demarcate their position in the broader society of the province, and it provides them with a release from contemporary tensions through nostalgic reminiscence.

The situation confronting rural Albertans in the years following the Second World War has been sufficiently disruptive to produce anxieties which give rise to the myth-making process. The primacy of agriculture in the provincial economy has been challenged by industrial pursuits, particularly those resulting from the extraction and processing of oil and natural gas. By 1971, agriculture's share of the net value of production in Alberta had fallen to less than one-third of its pre-war level.[4] Since the war, oil and natural gas production has increased by more than four thousand percent.[5] Thus, in spite of the fact that improved agricultural acreage increased by slightly more than forty percent between 1946 and 1971,[6] farming has become a much less important economic activity in Alberta.

Of more significance than the actual facts and figures demonstrating the shifting focus of the province's economy, however, is the way in which the changes have been perceived and projected. The oil and gas industry has been widely credited with producing the economic prosperity of the recent past.[7] It has received a good deal of media attention, particularly as the major point at issue between the federal and Alberta governments.[8] The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, loudly proclaimed as the surplus created by oil and gas royalties, is perhaps the most ostentatious display of provincial wealth. Its gold on blue logo, appearing on any projects receiving money from its coffers, together with the drilling derrick and pump jack seem often to rival the wheat stalk as symbols for Alberta. In a 1982 article in the Journal of Canadian Studies, Howard and Tamara Palmer state that, "most Albertans share a sense of pride and achievement in the expansion of the last decade."[9] The applicability of this statement to the rural, agricultural sector of the province is questionable. Although the economic boom helped to make possible the funding of local history projects, the resulting volumes virtually ignore the oil and gas industry on which it was based. Some of the more general works, J. G. MacGregor's A History of Alberta to name one, present fossil fuel developments as a continuation of the pioneering tradition of the province.[10] Such attitudes, however, are contrary to the general trend in popular history produced by and for the rural market. The explosion in numbers of community histories coincides very neatly with the oil and gas boom but the contents of these books suggest a sentiment quite different from the Palmers' contention. Rather than expressing pride in oil-based prosperity, rural amateur historians emphasize the role played by themselves and their ancestors in creating a viable food-producing economy and the continuing contributions of the agricultural community.[11]

Demographic changes detrimental to the position of small agrarian communities have accompanied the economic shifts of the period since World War Two. In the 1940s Alberta was still predominantly a province of rural and small-town dwellers; by 1971 three of every four Albertans lived in an urban area and more than two-thirds of those lived in Edmonton or Calgary.[12] In part, this shift is a result of the growth in urban-based industries and, in part, of the trend toward farm mechanization which has reduced the labour requirements of agriculture.[13] The number of Albertans employed in manufacturing industries grew by sixty percent from the mid 1950s to the early 1970s[14] and the increased financial and commercial activity in Alberta cities has also employed many.[15] In the same period, the farm population of the province has, notwithstanding increased acreage under cultivation, declined in absolute numbers, from 345,222 in 1951 to 234,924 in 1971,[16] as well as in percentage terms. Alberta farms have, therefore, increased in size but are owned and operated by a smaller number of individuals. For a variety of reasons, then, the typical Albertan is no longer either a farmer or a rancher. In a culture geared to the interests of the majority this situation is threatening for the remaining rural population.

Urbanization or, perhaps more properly, centralization has affected rural areas in another way. The configuration of rural communities has changed drastically in the last few decades. In the last chapter it was noted that the idealized farm community contained only a few essential services - a school, a post office, a store - and served a highly localized population. These centres have almost ceased to exist. With the exception of educational facilities provided by or for certain religious groups, one-room schools are no longer in operation. Rural children are typically bussed to schools in nearby towns.[17] Country stores and post offices appear to have suffered a similar fate. The number of post offices operating in Canada fell by nearly one-third between 1946 and 1975.[18] A provincial breakdown of such closures is only available for the years up to 1958 but it is evident that a relatively high proportion of them occurred in Alberta.[19] Local histories confirm this suggestion: several note the demise of district post offices and stores.[20] Declining numbers of operating primary collection grain elevators provide additional evidence of rural centralization. There were 1708 such elevators in Alberta in 1958; this had dropped to 476 by 1977.[21] The increasing mobility of Alberta's farm population resulting from wide-spread purchase of motor vehicles[22] and improved roads has rendered the tiny district centre anachronistic.

In Pioneering the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process, Dawson and Younge identify three levels of centres which were typical of the prairie frontier - focal cities, independent towns with a full range of services, and dependent villages providing only the most immediate needs of a small area.[23] When Dawson and Younge were writing in 1940 the full range of centres was still typical of the prairie provinces. Local histories and centralization figures lead one to believe that this is no longer commonly the case. The functions of the dependent village have largely been assumed by the independent town.

In a series of lectures published in 1967 under the title of Local History: Objective and Pursuit, H. P. R. Finberg said of this transition:

> We have moved away from a world of small, intensely self-conscious local units into the world of megalopolis, or what the town planner calls conurbations. Hence we are in danger of forgetting something which has played an immense part in the social experience of mankind. It may be difficult for us to conjure up a picture of the largely self-contained local community in the fullness of its life and vigour, but the measure of our difficulty is also the measure of our need to have its history put on record, for unless that is done a large and important tract of human experience will have passed beyond our ken.[24]

Alberta's amateur and popular historians clearly share this sentiment and are acting on it.

In The Age of Reform, American historian Richard Hofstader suggests that the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century was founded on a status crisis or revolution experienced by the established middle class of the day. As a class, they had dominated the political and economic life of the United States until about 1870. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw massive industrial development, urbanization, and concentration of wealth and power. Although the middle class shared in the prevailing prosperity they "suffered from the events of their time not through a shrinkage in their means but through the changed pattern in the distribution of deference and power."[25] Their eventual response was to create a new political role for themselves as leaders of a reform movement with broadly based support which attacked the practices of the new wealthy industrialists.[26]

The current situation in Alberta's rural communities has some similarity to that of the American middle class of eighty years ago. A generation ago farmers were the dominant class in Alberta; their interests were paramount to the makers of provincial government policy. They have shared in the prosperity of recent times[27] but they are not perceived to have been responsible for it. The attention of both government and media is largely directed to the oil and gas industry and the interests of the growing urban centres.[28] This change has, moreover, been a rapid one. The response of the agricultural community seems, at first sight, to be quite different from that of the American middle class in the early 1900s. Their major response has not been to try to create a new political and social role for themselves; however, by writing lengthy volumes detailing the agrarian origins of the province, they are establishing the importance and lasting value of their past achievements.

In addition to concerns about the status of the agricultural community and the character of rural life, the preoccupations of popular historians indicate that they have anxieties about the family and the position of individual in society. Women are idealized as home-bound creatures whose central function was to nurture the family and the broader community with food, comfortable surroundings, and a stable environment. Grandmothers, mothers, and wives are remembered with admiration for having sacrificed their own interests and comforts to enable the family to establish itself on the frontier. In no other aspect of the frontier myth is such a consistent picture presented from one account to another as that of women. It seems more than coincidental that this should occur at a time when the role of women in society is changing rapidly.

From the beginning of the twentieth century an increasing percentage of Canadian women have worked outside the home but, until 1951, this increase was gradual - less than ten percent in fifty years.[29] In the next thirty years, however, the participation rate of women in the Canadian workforce rose by nearly thirty percent.[30] Moreover, in 1951 married women were less than one-fifth as likely as single women to work for wages; by 1980 they were nearly four-fifths as likely to be in the labour force.[31] With the increasing popularity of women's rights movements and the political prominence given to women's issues the ideal of the self-sacrificing wife and mother is being threatened. Politically active women of the early 1900s sought the vote in part to extend the effects of their moral strength and nurturing ability to society at large.[32] The feminists of the last few decades have been more preoccupied with what society can do for them and will allow them to do for themselves.[33] The memorialists of female pioneers do not explicitly deplore the effects of recent feminist activity but neither to they depict the women of whom they write as having had any political concerns outside of purely local involvement in church and women's groups. The large measure of praise they accord to women as homemakers is, in itself, an implied criticism of current trends.

It is more difficult to trace the motives of popular historians in their treatment of men. The picture is more complex but self-reliance, progress through hard work, and moral rectitude seem to be the strongest characteristics of the idealized male pioneer. To a great extent, the writers seem to be responding, yet again, to the declining position of agriculture and, therefore, the prestige of agriculturalists. Alberta society contemporary with the writers has become a more complex environment in which the individual must function than was the era they remember. In our diversified economy, success is less readily measurable than it was in a predominantly agricultural society where it could be seen in terms of bushels of grain threshed or numbers of cattle shipped to market. The formula by which it could be achieved - hard physical work and persistence - is also less valid in today's work place where much of what is done exists only on paper or in a computer file. What is more, farmers today find themselves outside of the main race for success.

The growth of large cities offers other challenges to the values revealed by popular historians. The works under discussion here are, in the main, concerned with a stable population. If an individual is invited to contribute pioneer reminiscences to a local history or is motivated to write a book-length biography, it is probable that his family are long-term residents in their community. Many of the growing urban centres, on the other hand, have a highly transient population and some even contain a majority of non-

Alberta born residents.[34] When the primacy of the small farm community is challenged, so too is the value of the contributions of those who settled early and stayed. The last three decades have seen a dramatic rise in the crime rate in Alberta - in part a response to the equally dramatic rate of urbanization.[35] Popular historians see the frontier as a highly moral place in contrast to the harmful influence of the cities. In short, they evince a Jeffersonian attachment to an agrarian lifestyle which they believe promoted the establishment of a virtuous and productive population.

It would be overly simplistic to suggest that rural Albertans have become interested in their history solely in response to anxieties arising out of the changes of the post-war period. The reasons for writing given in local histories, biographies, and general accounts - nostalgia, acknowledgement of the work of the pioneers, and preservation of the experiences of a dying generation for the future - are all valid. Nonetheless, the aspects of pioneer life that are emphasized and those that are ignored are curiously similar from one work to another and it requires little effort to find links between contemporary circumstances and common historical perceptions. Although ethnic, economic, and environmental diversity is characteristic of agriculture in Alberta, in a broader sense, the impact of change outside the industry is similar for all farmers. They all suffer from the declining status of their profession and their communities and this has helped to produce a common need to assert agriculture as the foundation of the province.

In addition to the similar conditions faced by the writers and audiences of rural Alberta popular history, two filters are present within the material which have fostered the uniformity of the portrayal of frontier life. Such works are, by and large, the story of the successful. The contributors to local history books represent that sector of the pioneer population that managed to establish lasting family farms. Memoirs and biographies are written to commemorate those who made or felt they made some noteworthy contribution. Similarly, when the authors of general accounts single out individuals for special treatment, they do not choose failures. As a result, the impressions of those who have the least cause to remember the frontier in idealized terms are under-represented in the material produced in the last generation. Community opinion acts in much the same way. Local histories are written, in the main, for the members of the community which produces them. Most people are reluctant to expose themselves to public censure and ridicule and, therefore, one suspects, the authors of family accounts suppress disgraceful incidents and sentiments out of keeping with the collective desire to make heroes of the pioneers. This is less true for the writers of memoirs, biographies, and general histories as they are working in a more remote setting. If they desire commercial success, however, their products must conform to the demands of their audience.

Myth must be understood as a social process and not as something which arrives complete by the agency of some mysterious being. The selective memory of any part of the myth-making population is both shaped by the work of earlier contributors and an arbiter of future additions. In the case of the material under study here, this works, in part, through the medium of public opinion discussed above. However, there is a less conscious aspect of the phenomenon. People come to believe that events happened in certain ways and human beings behaved and thought in particular patterns because they have been taught by the existing myth that such was the case. In this sense, the frontier myth in Alberta is a part of the more general North American belief about the influence of the wilderness on human society. The connection between Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis and the picture presented by Alberta's popular historians has been noted in the foregoing chapters. This tradition has been transmitted through literature and television as well as through historical writing proper. Henry Nash Smith and Nicholas Karolides have documented the popularity of the pioneer theme in American novels. One might speculate that television series such as Bonanza and Little House on the Prairie have had a similar impact on popular perceptions of the frontier.[1] In Alberta, the continuation of the frontier myth is being assured by the provincial government. Three volumes in the Alberta Heritage Learning Resources series deal with the frontier period and treat it in an even more idealized fashion than do family raconteurs in community histories. We are rapidly approaching a point at which the myth of the noble pioneer will become the official school of Alberta history.

The images of which the frontier myth is built are highly romantic; the people are depicted as having been almost super-human, their lifestyle as impossibly simple, and, even the everyday occurrences of their lives are recounted in vivid detail. The language used by the writers does not, however, reveal that they are consciously attempting to exaggerate the qualities and events on which they focus. Most works, in fact, feature a strong sense of reality, as though the authors were writing about the commonplace phenomena of their own day. Plain language combined with dramatic images suggest the sort of unconscious romanticism that one looks to find in literature. Even the major theme employed in most works is borrowed from literature. Of the basic themes which identify man's relationship with his world - man versus society, man versus man, man versus himself, and man versus nature - only the last is used with any frequency.

The natural world may be depicted in popular histories as either a passive or an active foe of the pioneer but it is always seen as a force with which he had to contend. When he arrived, his major challenge, we are told, was to turn the wilderness into a productive environment either by locating a suitable place for his livestock or by plowing it into orderly fields. References to the open or untouched character of the land are common even though many of the subjects came to areas which were already well settled. Most commonly, the tone of such accounts is positive, suggesting that the open frontier was viewed as opportunity:

> From this vantage point one hill folded into the next, some cloaked in dark green jackpine, while others displayed the pale green of the aspen poplar and silver birch. It was a peaceful scene, a place to build a home of our very own.[36]

For these writers, in the struggle between the pioneer and the elements, nature was a passive force or even a benevolent enemy. Narrators frequently emphasize the role of wild game and berries in supplementing the family diet in the early years:

> As game was plentiful, we ate a lot of partridge and prairie chicken. There were berries all over: raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, blueberries. We could go down into the bush around Morrow's mill and in an afternoon pick a hundred-pound flour sack full of high bush cranberries which made beautiful jelly.[37]

Nonetheless, the conditions imposed by the physical environment were the obstacles which stood between the settler and success. References to the shortness of the growing season, the difficulties of clearing brush or breaking sod, and the need to cope with isolation occur in the same works which present the virgin land as having been a welcome challenge and nature as a bountiful provider.

In a smaller but significant number of accounts, nature is depicted as a harsh and actively malevolent enemy. Tales of settlers being lured on by early success and then devastated by a hail storm, prairie fire, or some other weather disaster just when prosperity as well as survival seemed to be within reach are relatively easy to find:

> My parents had many hardships, as did most people at one time or another. One big disappointment was the promised trip back "home", as soon as the wheat was harvested one fall. However, one morning when they got out of bed, the wheat lay under the snow.[38]

To some extent, this view of nature is tied to the region of the province in which the writer lives. The open prairies of the south tend to produce more stories of sudden natural disaster.

The use of nature as man's principal opponent in his fight to create a new home serves an important function in the frontier myth. Without conflict of some sort there would be no story; a hero must meet and overcome some challenge to be a hero. It is antipathetic to the prevailing concept of the pioneer that he should lack the internal resources to accomplish his task or that he should be so anti-social as to put obstacles in the way of others trying to achieve theirs. While it is true that the Alberta frontiersman is occasionally held to have been in conflict with outside society as represented by government agencies, such references are rare; the immediate community usually forms the setting for the entire pioneer experience. Man versus nature is, then, a convenient literary tool. The pioneer has his struggle before he finds success but it is a simplified one, purified of that which is unacceptable.

In his recent monograph, Promise of Eden, Doug

Owram has documented the central Canadian transition of attitudes toward the west in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Initially the west was seen as a kind of wasteland from which there was little hope of seeing any benefit. Over time, as new studies were conducted and political and cultural conditions demanded a place for expansion, the prairies came to be viewed as opportunity. The notion that settlers had only to arrive and commence farming to turn the west into a garden paradise of Anglo-Canadian tradition took hold.

The situation that actual pioneers found was, of course, far from being Eden. They were isolated both socially and politically from their places of origin. Many did find economic success. If they arrived with sufficient capital, found good land and worked hard on it, had good fortune with weather and outside market conditions, and were near the main transportation routes, the frontier was all they had been promised. Others failed completely and left. They might have been the victims of bad advice regarding land locations, of their own ignorance or laziness, or, simply, of their own desire to move on. For most, however, the frontier was neither Eden nor Hell on Earth. They managed to survive and even to enjoy some luxuries and they stayed, not out of any noble willingness to sacrifice, but because there was no option available which seemed to offer a better opportunity.

The descendents of the Alberta pioneers, in their recent writings, remember something quite different from both the reality of the frontier and the Eden that was depicted beforehand. For them the Alberta that the settlers found was a modern version of biblical Isreal. Like the Jews in Egypt the settlers are thought to have been forced to leave their homes by intolerable conditions. In the eyes of the writers, the old places lacked opportunity, threatened starvation, had no space left, or were politically undesirable. Alberta, we are told, was the Promised Land but, like Isreal, it was not given freely: the right to enjoy it had to be earned. The Jews from Egypt faced a long trek with both physical and moral obstacles and when they arrived they had to fight a host of tribes who occupied their homeland. The Alberta pioneers of the popular history books face a similar journey and similar tests. Their fight was with the land and not with its human occupants but ultimately they are seen as having earned the same reward - a place they could call their own.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1] Pardon E. Tillinghast, The Specious Past (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1972), pp. 48-49.

[2] Paul Leonard Voisey, "Forging the Western Tradition: Pioneer Approaches to Settlement and Agriculture in Southern Alberta Communities," (PhD. Thesis, Department of History, University of Toronto, 1982), pp. 14-15.

[3] Raphael Patai, Myth and Modern Man (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 68.

[4] Roger Gibbins, Prairie Politics and Society: Regionalism in Decline (Toronto: Butterworth and Company, 1980), p. 78.

[5] F. H. Leacy, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Minister of Supply and Services, 1983), Q14 & Q27.

[6] Ibid., M43.

[7] Government of Alberta, White Paper: Proposals for an Industrial and Science Strategy for Albertans, 1985-1990 ([Edmonton]: [Government of Alberta], July, 1984), p. 16; Howard Palmer and Tamara Palmer, "The Alberta Experience," Journal of Canadian Studies 17 (Fall 1982): 28-29; Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, Canada since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 411; Carlo Caldarola, Society and Politics in Alberta: Research Papers (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), p. ix.

[8] David K. Elton and Arthur M. Goddard, "The Conservative Takeover, 1971 -," in Society and Politics in Alberta: Research Papers, ed. Carlo Caldarola (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), pp. 59-60.

[9] Palmer and Palmer, p. 26.

[10] J. G. MacGregor, A History of Alberta, rev. ed. (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1981), p. 11.

[11] See for example: Alice Voisey, ed., Wheat Country: A History of Vulcan and District (Vulcan, Alberta: Vulcan & District Historical Society, 1973), pp. 8-9.

[12] Gibbins, pp. 68-69.

[13] Ibid., p. 71.

[14] Leacy, M124.

[15] Alberta Bureau of Statistics, Alberta Treasury, Alberta Statistical Review Annual, 1982 ([Edmonton]: [Government of Alberta], November 1983), p. 23.

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[16] Leacy, M10.

[17] Dale Holtslander, "School Districts of Alberta" (Unpublished Manuscript in Alberta's Legislature Library, 1979), p. 8.

[18] Leacy, T293-T305.

[19] Ibid.

[20] See for example: Evelyn Buckley, ed., Chaps and Chinooks: A History West of Calgary, vol. 1 of 2 (Calgary: Foothills Historical Society, 1976), pp. 127-132; Jessie J. Campbell, ed., Chatter Chips from Beaver Dam Creek: Castor and Her Neighbours, 1909-1974 (Castor, Alberta: Castor Old Timers' Association, 1974), p. 383.

[21] Leacy, M450.

[22] Ibid., T183-T186.

[23] W. A. Mackintosh and W. L. G. Joerg, gen. eds., Canadian Frontiers of Settlement, 10 vols. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada), vol. 8: Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process (1940) by C. A. Dawson and Eva R. Younge, pp. 39-59.

[24] H. P. R. Finberg, Local History: Objective and Pursuit (Newton Abbot, Devon: David and Charles, 1967), pp. 35-36.

[25] Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 135.

[26] Ibid., pp. 143-147.

[27] Alberta Bureau of Statistics, Alberta Treasury, p. 29. The Personal Income table suggests that between 1971 and 1981, without adjusting for inflation, that the incomes of farmers rose by 435% while the average for all sectors was somewhat higher at 517%.

[28] Government of Alberta, White Paper, passim.

[29] Paul Phillips and Erin Phillips, Women and Work: Inequality in the Labour Market (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1983), p. 35.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 36.

[32] Robert Craig Brown and Ramsey Cook, Canada 1896-1921 A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), pp. 296-297.

[33] Bothwell, Drummond, and English, pp. 336-337 & 453.

[34] Palmer and Palmer, p. 24.

[35] Leacy, Z75; Palmer and Palmer, p. 24.

[36] Maurice Destrube, Pioneering in Alberta: Maurice Destrube's Story, intro. Lewis G. Thomas, ed., James E. Hendrickson, Historical Society of Alberta, no. 4, gen. ed. R. C. Macleod (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1981), p. 20; See also: Vauxhall and Districts Book Committee, eds., Where Waters Flow ([n.p.]: [n.p.], [1969]), p. 101; Centennial Book Committee, Pioneers Who Blazed the Trail: A History of High Prairie and District (High Prairie, Alberta: Farm Women's Union of Alberta, High Prairie Local 204, 1968), p. 148; Ponoka and District Historical Society, eds., Ponoka Panorama (Ponoka, Alberta: Ponoka and District Historical Society, 1973), p. 715.

[37] Gwendolyn A. Ross, ed., A Patchwork of Memories (Thorsby, Alberta: The Historical Society of Thorsby and District, 1979), p. 230; See also: Henry Stelfox, Rambling Thoughts of a Wandering Fellow, 1903-1968 ([n.p.]: [n.p.], 1972), pp. 30-31; Malmo Women's Institute, eds., Lewisville Pioneers ([n.p.]: [Malmo Women's Institute], [1962]), p. 50.

[38] Lillian Bretzlaff and Mildred Hay, eds., Colinton and Districts: Yesterday & Today (Colinton, Alberta: [History Book Club], [1980]), p. 208; For an account of destructive frost see: Morrin and District History Book Committee, eds., Blooming Prairie: A History of Morrin and District (Morrin, Alberta: Morrin and District History Book Committee, 1979), p. 533; For an account of a destructive fire see: Ned Dodd, ed., Remember When: The History of Trochu and District (Trochu, Alberta: Trochu History Book Committee, 1975), p. 325. For an account of a destructive hail storm see: Alice Voisey, p. 444.

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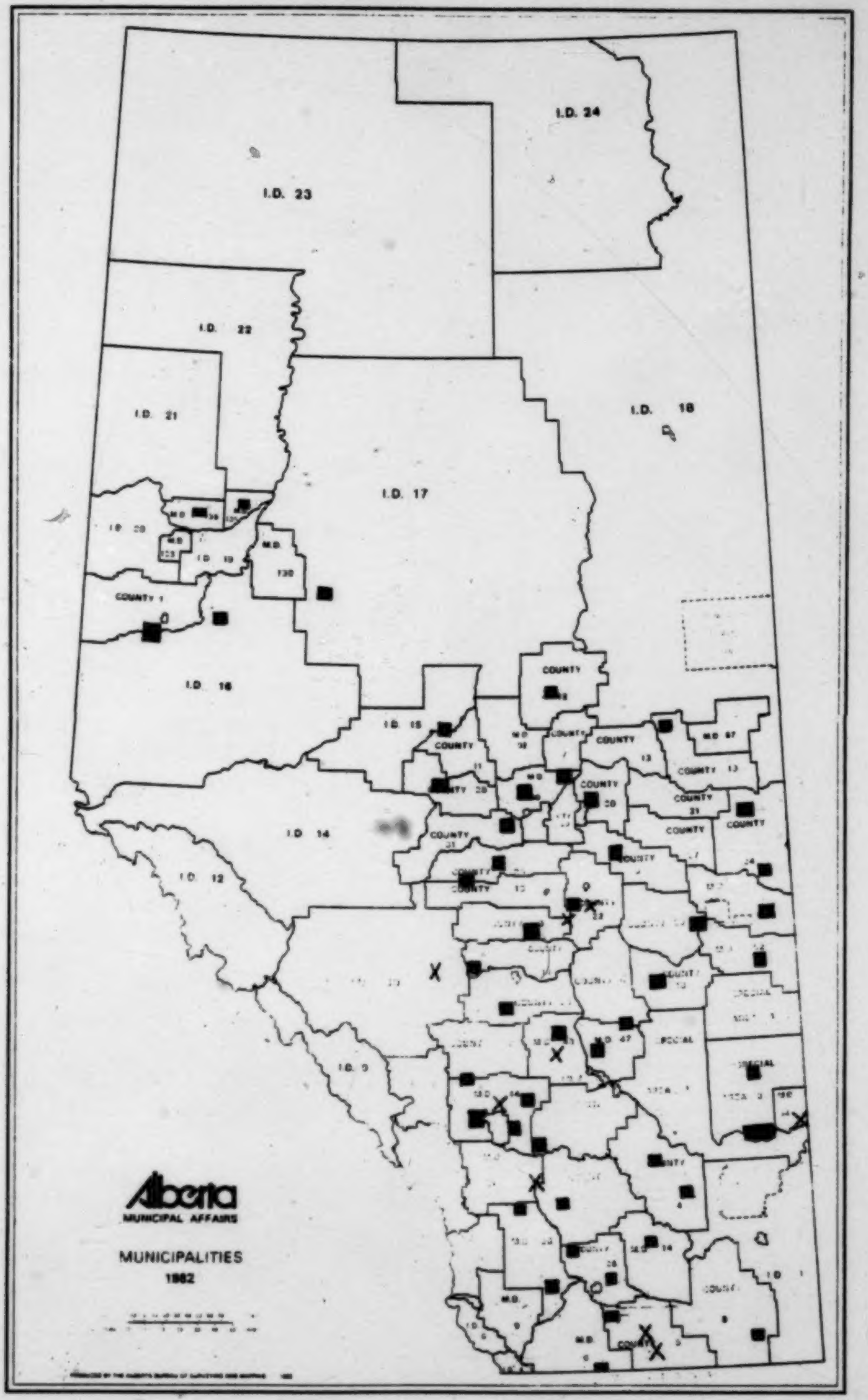
APPENDIX



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